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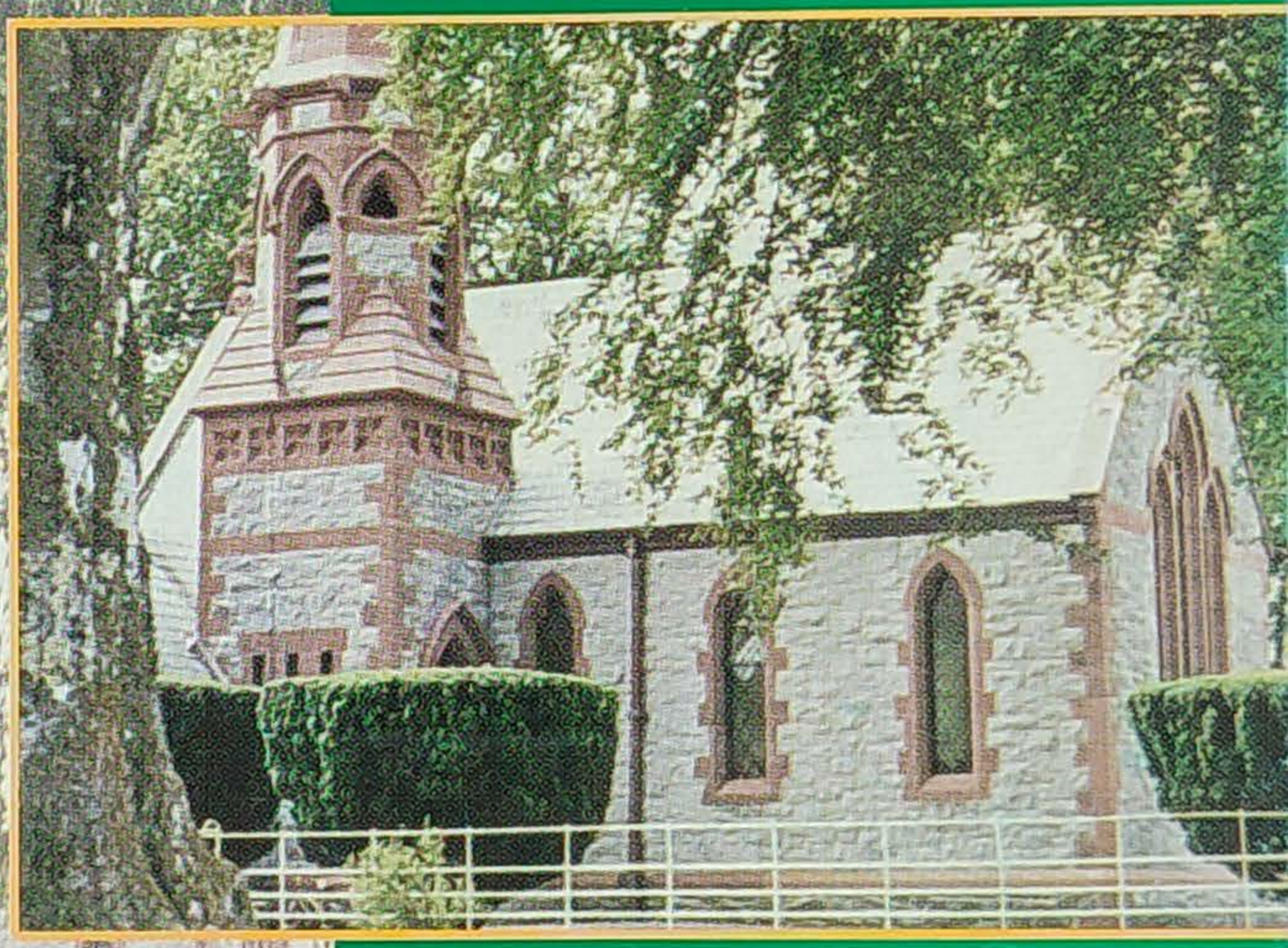
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Journal of the Irish Baptist Historical Society



Editor: Joshua Thompson
BA, D Phil (Oxon)

Volume Five (New Series)

1997 ~ 1998

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
(Founded 1968)

JOURNAL

Volume Five (New Series) 1997-98

EDITOR: Joshua Thompson, B.A., D.Phil. (Oxon.)

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- Florence M Ruddock was the wife of Pastor Samuel Ruddock, a well-known and respected minister among the Irish Baptist churches. A short time before her death she wrote a short article on 'Earlier Mission Work in Dublin', the substance of which is given below.

- Cover photograph: Brannockstown Baptist Church, Co Kildare.

EDITORIAL

1998 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of the Irish Baptist Historical Society, and the publication of this Journal. Following a preparatory meeting on 2nd November 1967, the first meeting of the Society was held at the Irish Baptist College in Belfast, on 26th January, 1968. The inaugural paper was read by Dr HD Gribbon on "The Cork Church Book 1653-1875". At that meeting steps were taken to initiate a programme to collect, collate and catalogue resource material, a task which is ongoing today.

Since last September, thanks to the generosity of Sir Ivan Neill, a project to produce a definitive history of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission was begun. Andrew Reid, a graduate of the Irish Baptist College, is researching the IBFM archives and, under the supervision of Dr Maurice Dowling, plans to write and submit a thesis for the award of an M Th degree by Queen's University, Belfast. This work will form the basis of a published history of the IBFM.

The papers presented in this issue of the Journal provide a unique mixture, reflecting the desire of the Members of the Society to stimulate interest in important historical topics outside our normal ambit, but to some degree germane to the witness of Baptists in Ireland. The pervasive influence of the "New Age" movement in Western society cannot be ignored, and Norman Shields' paper is a useful guide to its importance. Maurice Dowling's informative survey of Baptists in Czarist Russia and the former Soviet Union provides as a reliable introduction to further study. Claude Macqigg's "The Minnis Mills's Diaries" preseves the memory of the pastor of Orangefield Baptist Church, Belfast.

The modest £5.00 member's subscription (the first increase since 1989) has been increased to £10.00, and will include as before a copy of the Journal. A subscription of £15.00 has been introduced to include membership for a husband and wife with one copy of the Journal included.

THE MINNIS MILLS DIARIES

by Claude Macquigg

Minnis Mills (1904 - 1982)

Minnis Mills was born on 2nd February 1904, the son of Robert John and Ellen. His paternal grandparents were Michael Mills and Eliza (née Dawson) from Dromore Co Down, his maternal grandparents being Andrew and Margaret Minnis of Shanaghan near Katesbridge of the same county. (The Minnis Family are buried in Ballyroney Presbyterian churchyard. Originally they had come from Scotland).

Minnis was the youngest of four children, having two older brothers, Frederick Stanley Arnot and John Anderson and a sister Ellen ("Nellie"). His parents' first home was probably in Farnham Street off the Ormeau Road in south Belfast. When Minnis was very young the family moved just round the corner into No 87 Rugby Avenue, where they lived above shop premises in which his father had a grocery business. The family also at the same time conducted a similar commercial enterprise at nearby 93 Agincourt Avenue.

He attended Rosetta Primary School where indeed his future wife was also a pupil at the same time. Gladys, however, was three years his junior and they were not then in any way acquainted. After a period of further education in the Belfast College of Technology Minnis entered the business world at the early age of fourteen. It is apparent that he commenced writing his diaries four years later. He had been converted on Halloween night, 1918, then aged fourteen, the Lord speaking to him through the words of Isaiah 53 verse 6... "All we like sheep have gone astray,we have turned every one to his own way and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all".

I. 1922 "Riots and Revivals"

The first entry in this diary, written on New Year's Day, refers to the attendance of Minnis Mills at an afternoon service in the Victoria Hall Belfast where an Assembly of the Brethren worshipped. This is followed by further references to his frequent presence at their meetings in several other locations. His father, originally a Presbyterian, had left that denomination to join the Plymouth Brethren and had become very active among them assuming a position of leadership. An ardent exponent of their distinctive principles he had helped found Fulton Street Gospel Hall, near Shaftesbury Square,Belfast. Also a keen evangelist he had become well known to the general public too, leading open-air meetings. In those days there was the phenomenon of literally crowds of young people "parading" up and down the pavements of some of the city's main thoroughfares especially on a Sunday evening after the time of church services. They were simply looking for each other's company and lacking anywhere else to go or anything with which to occupy themselves, they provided a ready-made audience for those who were willing to present them with the Gospel message and who could attract and hold their attention.

Minnis himself had become a member of the Ballyhackamore Gospel Hall in east Belfast and it is early apparent that he too had an interest in the wider work and influence of the Brethren movement. We read e.g. that in July of this year he crossed on the Belfast-Liverpool boat to attend one of their conferences in Bath. There he enjoyed not only "good meetings all week" (7.7.22) but typically of one who keenly observed all that was going on around him he availed himself of every opportunity to savour the delights of every new sight and sound. Of that outward journey he records ... (1.7.22)..... "Sailed for Liverpool - very rough. Sat on deck singing till almost 12 o'clock". (There was most likely a group of them travelling together who engaged in hymn singing - a common practice in those days). The following morning he wrote ... "Saw the sun rise as we sailed up the Mersey - the sight was really lovely. Had breakfast at a cafe - cost two shillings and seven pence".

A firm exponent of the dictum "mens sana in corpore sano", he revelled in an outdoor life. Frequent references point to the fact that he was a keen

swimmer and a competent diver. The entry for 11.7.22 is typical... "Glorious summer day. H[arold?] and I went to the Gobbins. Had to carry bicycles a long distance over stone. Had an enjoyable swim - sea rough. Home at 10-45 - a day to be remembered". It was not unusual for him to be seen in the early morning on the steps of the Ormeau Avenue Baths awaiting their opening so that he could avail himself of a quick dip before proceeding to school and in later days to his place of work. He made good use of a bicycle for transport as well as recreation and the juxtaposition in his complete entry for 29.4.22 which records the contrasting activities for his "day off" will raise a wry smile for the older reader... "Last open air. Enamelled bicycle". In those days a second-hand version of a velocipede could be purchased for a few shillings and any rusty parts of the frame were easily dealt with by the application of a sixpenny tin of black paint purchased in Woolworths!

Secular Employment

We learn (14.2.22) that he acquired his first home in the Knock district of east Belfast and with enthusiasm set about digging the garden in order to get it into order. It was a detached house immediately adjacent to Neill's Hill railway station on the Sandown Road and the brief journey on the Bangor and County Down Railway from the "halt" down to the terminus at Queen's Quay provided him with easy access to the city centre. Indeed he even refers (1.3.22) to "going home for dinner by train" and it was his humorous claim that in the morning while shaving he could see the train leaving the nearby Knock station and still be down on his local platform in time to board it for work.

Throughout the course of this year we have several references to his place of employment, significantly in each single case mention being made to working late at the office, sometimes till 8.30 or even 10.30 in the evening. His first employer was the firm of Robertson, Ledlie Ferguson & Co Ltd, Manufacturers and Warehouse-men who occupied the city centre premises known as the Bank Buildings (now "Primark"). He was in their employment from January 1918 until February 1923, first serving an indentured (paid-for) apprenticeship in their counting house and then obtaining an appointment as an assistant cashier. The written testimonial he received when he concluded his term of service with that company referred to his conduct as being

exemplary and that the firm had "found him honest, sober, reliable and industrious ... that he had obtained a good business training and had become well acquainted with the routineof counting house work".

Dark Clouds Gather

His frequent references to packed halls and overflowing meetings must be read against a background of severe economic hardship and serious civil unrest. The 1920s and 30s are for ever identified in the public mind with a most severe and prolonged recession. Slum housing, malnutrition, poor health and, for many, stark poverty were inadequately eased by state benefits that were heavily means-tested. Belfast had begun the twentieth century as a confident and energetic provincial city and in the full flush of its industrial and commercial power. In 1911 its population was 387,000 and this had multiplied more than fourteen times since 1800. At the time of the First World War it could boast two of the largest shipyards in the world - Harland & Wolff and Workman & Clark. It was also the world's most important linen centre,with its expansive single textile firm, York Street Flax Spinning Company and the most sizeable ropeworks of its kind. In total it accounted for one third of Ireland's entire industrial production. From 1920, however, both the city and Northern Ireland as a whole entered a prolonged period of persistent and unyielding depression. Belfast's main traditional industries declined and the giants of the nineteenth century progressively became the dinosaurs of the twentieth.

Moreover, references (6.3.22) to "heavy firing in the city" and (8.5.22) to "searched on the Belmont Road" remind us, too, of the political state of the Province at that time. Two years previously in 1920 the Westminster Parliament had passed the Government of Ireland Act implementing the 1914 Home Rule Bill but creating two separate Irish parliaments in Dublin and Belfast, and just the previous year in 1921 Sir James Craig (later Viscount Craigavon) had replaced Edward Carson as head of the Unionist Party. It was inevitable that the tension of the Anglo-Irish War and the partition of the Island in 1921 would spill over into Ulster. Indeed between 1920 and 1922 four hundred and fifty people were killed in sectarian rioting in the Six Counties. In Belfast itself, night curfew was at times imposed, and even in the day time it was by no means uncommon for passengers on the trams to

have to lie down on the floor in order to escape the snipers' bullets as they passed through particularly troubled areas of the city on their way to and from their places of employment.

Ministry of "WP"

The minds and hearts of many were thus being prepared by God's Holy Spirit for a challenging and fearless proclamation of the Gospel. Minnis records his attendance at various meetings conducted by the Rev WP Nicholson, referring to "packed halls" and "memorable preaching". Towards the end of the Great War "WP" had joined the staff of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and his responsibilities in its Extension Department involved considerable travelling and evangelistic work. Several missions were held in Scotland during the winter of 1920-21 under the auspices of the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association and in October 1920 he returned to his native territory and conducted a most successful mission in Bangor, Co Down. As a consequence invitations came from various other centres throughout the Province; but he was unable to accept them for some months owing to his commitments in Scotland. Very significantly, however, this lapse of time allowed much prayerful preparation for his return and the net result was a widespread spirit of expectancy.

Thus in the Spring of 1921 there began a series of Gospel Campaigns which resulted in a revival of spiritual religion throughout the Province, and, indeed, had much to do, in years following with a whole increased interest in world evangelism on the part of those who were touched by the Spirit of God. A mission e.g. held in 1922 in Lisburn Co Antrim is recorded as having a profound effect on the churches and the community generally. Nearly two thousand enquirers were dealt with, the minister of one particular congregation having no less than seven hundred referred to him. This was a number which actually outstripped the normal seating capacity of his building.

We read (12.2.22)... "Nicholson comes to town" and this marked the beginning of an unforgetable series of missions in the city of Belfast itself. Political trouble and its resulting bloodshed were at their worst and many murders were committed along with much destruction of property. The Shankill Road area was the scene of great disorder and it is truly remarkable

that at such a time a united mission was held in the (Presbyterian) Albert Hall, where Dr Henry Montgomery had carried on a faithful evangelistic work for a quarter of a century. He had the support of almost a score of ministers in the area in planning for the mission which commenced on that memorable February evening. Readers of the Belfast News-Letter learned the following morning that "the opening service had a crowded hall, every seat being occupied and many people standing throughout the entire service". The report of the Shankill Road Mission Committee itself to the (Presbyterian) Annual Assembly of 1922 also stated... "The Rev W P Nicholson conducted a very successful mission in the Albert Hall which was packed every evening with close on three thousand people". It continues ... "two thousand two hundred and sixty men and women and young people passed through the enquiry rooms and nearly all these were led, it is believed, to a definite decision for Christ. Towards the end of that momentous year the diary also records (16.11.22) "Went to St. Enoch's to hear 'W P' Hall packed". This Presbyterian church, situated at Carlisle Circus not far from the city centre, had been in previous years the scene of many missions conducted by well known evangelists among whom, notably, was D L Moody. This building with its two galleries was then regarded as the auditorium with the largest capacity in the whole of Belfast. An impression of that campaign was later given by the minister Dr John Pollock in the weekly Christian periodical, The Life of Faith .... "Under the auspices of twenty co-operating churches Mr Nicholson has just concluded a five-weeks' mission ... many who were opposed to him have changed their attitude and are now among his more or less enthusiastic admirers".

Of the spiritual effect of these missions, Mr Herbert Ireland, General Secretary of the Belfast YMCA, made the following comments ... "God's tide is rising here ... we call it revival... deputations of cabmen and tramwaymen, gangs that lounged at street corners, groups of girls out of warehouses, smart young business men and women, people of leisure and wealth, students in our universities, and employers of labour, rising in testimony meetings and witnessing for the Master whom they now serve... midweek prayer meetings overflowing in some instances with attendances of between three and four hundred with warmth and fervour unbounded... on the streets and on the tramcars one frequently hears earnest conversation about personal religion and the atmosphere is such that it is easy to speak about spiritual things". It is commonly acknowledged that sectarian violence and it potential horrendous

increase was greatly restrained. Minnis' reference (11.6.22) to.... special Prayer Meeting for Ireland" is an illustration of how many were deeply conscious of a dependence on God to meet the needs of the individual and of the nation.

Personal Involvement

It is obvious from the reading of the diaries that throughout this period, where the Spirit of God was so mightily at work in the Province of Ulster, Minnis Mills was not just a mere spectator of Christian activities but that he himself began to be an active participant. We read (3.6.22) ... "7.00am. Slightly coolish. Read James chapter three". "We were unable to go to Templepatrick on account of so few speakers so we went to Whiteabbey and Monkstown. First time to speak in Open-air at Green" .Amos 4:12.. 'Prepare to meet your God, O Israel'."

It is interesting to note in passing that some years later he penned an addition to that earlier entry..."I was eighteen years old at the time". He must therefore have read over his diaries at a later date and one is left with a distinct impression that they were not intended to be solely of a private nature. Rather, perhaps even sub-consciously, he had a desire that they would be read by us, those of a later generation. If such indeed be the case then no doubt he wanted us to share with him the thrill of those early days which saw so evidently the gracious hand of God at work and thus ourselves be challenged to "believe God".

The very next day (4.6.22) we also find a brief but significant entry "First time to take a Sunday School Class" and there are further frequent references to open airs at various places in the city and at other country locations where he was present and participated. There are, in addition, references to tract distribution and we begin to find use of the title "Village Work" which was the name given to an evangelistic team of young men, members of Ballyhackamore gospel Hall. This was a band of four, of whom Minnis was one, who felt constrained to go out into the highways and byways to preach the Gospel. (The other members were ... a Jim McFerran who later went to India as a teaplanter, Henry Holmes who became owner of Henry's store in York Street and Harry McKee who was killed as a spectator at the Ards Tourist Trophy Motor Race). The mere reading of a typical entry (7.10.22) provides

its own commentary on the spiritual ethos of those days... "Glorious day. Walked to Edenderry with H. Had a fine meeting. At Green's for tea. Walked home in two hours. You could almost have read in the moonlight. Our conversation was helpful along the way".

Thus as the first recorded year draws to a close we are left with the picture of a young man very conscious of the grace of God towards him and of one who was not only greatly challenged by the needs of 'the Lost' around him, but who was also inspired by what he had witnessed of the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who were faithful to the preaching of the Word. Attendance at an aunt's funeral (5.1.22) had reminded him of the frailty and brevity of the human life and a prayer he records later that same month (25.1.22) is worthy of special note.... "Oh that I might have my request that God would grant me the thing I long for". This appears to us as an enigmatic statement and the reader might well wonder what "my request" indeed was. We have here, however, a picture, to be borne out in the testimony of later years, of a young Christian who was seeking diligently to maintain a close walk with his Master. Alone in that railway carriage (12.6.22) he seized the opportunity to have "a little talk with Jesus" and the glory of a beautiful summer day (24.7.22) served to bring home to him the eternal reality that the Lord required so much more of his life; and that in the coming years he could attain fulfilment only within His will..... "Glorious day. It seems to me as I look upon this day that it is a lost day. So little accomplished. So little of Christ and if He is taken out of our life we have nothing left".

The first and the other two homes he subsequently owned were given the name "Anwoth". Words penned by that famous Scottish Covenanter, Samuel Rutherford had greatly impressed him....

"If one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
Then my, heaven, shall be two heavens,
In Emmanuel's land."

Throughout the following sixty years, God graciously answered the prayers of Minnis Mills, and indeed those of his parents, that he would be used in the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Typically of the man, he is patently

honest in what he records. The Christian life, as he found, is not one of unbroken joy. He writes (24.5.22)..."Dull and chilly. A blank day, an unhappy. day". However even at that early stage he was determined to "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling" and as he viewed the New Year ahead he enscribed on a memoranda page of that first diary the words ....

"Speak a shade more kindly
Than a year before
Pray a little oftener,
Love a little more.
Cling a little closer
To the Saviour's love
And life below will daily grow
More like the life above."

For the last entry of 1922 we read... (31.12.22) "Fine frosty day. F A (Fred Arnot, his oldest brother) and I had fine time of prayer as the New Year approached".

II. 1923-1939 "New Beginnings"

[No diaries appear to have been written throughout these years]

Our Diarist's first employment with that city manufacturer lasted just over five years. During the latter part of that period of time his father suffered a stroke. He was paralysed for the remaining three years of his life and as a consequence both Minnis and his brother Fred Arnot left their work and between them sought to carry on the family business. The shouldering of such heavy responsibilities both in the home and in shop proved an uphill struggle for all concerned. They were, however, a very closely knit family and when the end finally came just before Christmas 1926 their sense of loss was keenly felt.

Parental Tribute

Of his Father and Mother he was later to write.. "I give God thanks for good and pious parents, both of whom are now at rest. They sacrificed themselves to the end. I have reached a period in life which serves to remind

me of a similar period in the life of Father and Mother. They were busy from early morning to late evening but always had time for the children. The claims of God were ever upheld. They sought by prayer and example to shield us from the wiles of the Devil. I am sure as they both looked upon my infant face they breathed a prayer. May that prayer be answered in a useful and Christlike life. Thank you, Dear Ones, I hope by divine gaace to follow in your steps all the way".

He had the ability to express his emotions and feelings generally in poetry and from time to time throughout these diaries we encounter such evidences of his imaginative and beautiful thought. One such further example of this literary talent is encountered at this time of the family's bereavement. Of his Father he penned the words....

God gave us one
To whom in tender years
We came with childish fears
And found in him our strength:
We called him 'Father'

Father indeed! He loved us all.
We know it better now than then.
If only now to him we all could say,
'You taught us well,
Your memory we revere to-day'.
Perhaps he knows.

Twas not in vain the pains you took
To hold before our growing minds
The truth divine.
We follow in the track you trod
Assured within our hearts it leads to God."

This gift of written and oral expression so early in evidence was probably inherited from his mother who had a similar talent. It was not just a facility in the manipulation of words and the use of language generally. Rather it revealed

the sincerity of his whole warm personality. He had a loving heart, not just for his own intimate circle; but all those who came into contact with him, even briefly, were immediately attracted to one they sensed had a sincere interest in them and had time for them. In short, he had "the makings of a true pastor" and it was soon to become evident that this was indeed God's plan and purpose for his life.

Marriage

After the death of his father, Minnis obtained the position of book-keeper with the firm of J N Richardson, Sons & Owden (commonly known as ("R S & O"), Linen Manufacturers of Donegal Square North, occupying a building later to become the Water Office and now Marks & Spencer's extended premises. His brother, Fred Arnot, also returned to employment in the city.

Another new beginning for him was in the realm of marriage. During his first period of employment he had become acquainted with another employee of the firm, one Gladys Streeter. They first met on her 14th birthday, the very day she started work. She was employed at the cash desk of the retail department and Minnis, himself then just 17 years of age, came down from the wholesale to collect the day's takings. When he entered the door they looked at each other and both blushed. It was the start of a true romance, though eight years were to elapse before they started "going together". After two years of courtship the marriage date was 6th August 1931. They were to be together for fifty one years all but four days.

The Chosen Bride

Gladys was born in Wallsend-on-Tyne in 1906, the daughter of an engine draughts-man. Her mother Ellen, née Chitchley, had a sister Maud who married Reginald Lee. (When Maud died he remarried and had a son Laurie Lee who became the well known author, recently deceased). When Gladys was three years old her family came to live in Belfast, her father having obtained employment in Workman & Clarke's Shipyard. (He was later to become an assistant manager in Harland & Wolff). The family were Church of Ireland

and worshipped in St Mark's Dundela. She came to a saving knowledge of Christ at the age of twenty in the Everton Hall, Cregagh, then an independent church.

During their period of courtship Minnis took her to a wide variety of meetings, notably to a "Help Heavenward" meeting held on Saturday evenings in the Victoria Memorial Hall, May street. It was a popular venue for a young people's fellowship. It was in that Brethren Assembly, where they both had become members, that they were married by Dr William Herron, whose secular employment was as an Inspector of the Departmen of Education. The bridesmaids were Peggy Milne of Wallsend and Evelyn Sterrit who worked in the same office as Gladys. The flowergirl was her niece Margaret Morrow and the best man Hugh McFerran, a fellow employee of Minnis.

Their honeymoon was spent in London at the Rosborough Guest House,Camberwell Road. Their eight nights' room and breakfast at four and six pence per night amounted to three pounds twelve shillings. Extra lunches and suppers came to a further ten shillings, a total of four pounds two shillings. Their landlady. Mrs Florence Philp wrote to them after their return home that "two or three pieces of confetti told the tale, though I did not tell the others". The first stopping place on their sightseeing tour of the Metropolis was the grave of Charles Hadden Spurgeon in Norwood Cemetery and he also took his young bride to Bunhill Fields where both John Bunyan and Susannah Wesley are buried. Gladys protested mildly at such a honeymoon itinerary, but the gallant husband replied, "Well you know, Dear, getting married is a very 'grave' business!"

Widening Ripples

His membership in the Ballyhackamore Gospel Hall had been terminated as a result of his desire to be "less exclusive" and so, though still in secular employment, he continued to exercise a growing preaching ministry outside of Brethren circles. It is significant that he was always ready to acknowledge the great benefits of his early training. He often spoke for example of a Mr William Gilmore a Brethren evangelist from Bangor, who had been a frequent visitor in his parents' home and who indeed had stood by him when his father was ill. It was that brother who, when Minnis was still a

young Christian, had brought him into his place of work a book of Spurgeon's sermons with the exhortation "Read that!" He followed that advice and so there began a life-long acquaintance with the Prince of Preachers. On many occasions, particularly on the anniversary of Spurgeon's death he paid him tribute, recording on one occasion, "That great man and his work and ministry has influenced my life and still does. I thank God for the day I began to be introduced to CHS. England sorely needs such a man of God today. How we should plead with God to be gracious and give us another mighty voice. Sleep on beloved. Your work abides. Only 57 years old when his work ended yet what life could be more complete! What a poor thing my life of service is when I think of CHS".

Baptist Connection

Another Christian brother from whom Minnis received much encouragement and advice was a Mr Sam Galway, a member of Mountpottinger Baptist Church and a brother-in-law of Pastor Louis Deens. Mr Galway also helped to run a Baptist Hall, a wooden structure situated at the Ballyhackmore end of Sandown Road. Minnis, then in membership of the Victoria Hall, preached there at his invitation and in October 1938 was asked to undertake the further responsibility of conducting an evangelistic campaign in Sandown Road.

Among those meeting in the Sandown Hall were a number who had a special interest in Reformed Theology (often referred to as Calvinism). Since God is to be known and worshipped as the sovereign Lord, this biblical system underlines the sole activity of God in salvation and insists upon the invincibility of His grace. In the winter of 1938 this group of believers withdrew from the work in Sandown Road and began to hold meetings in their own homes, notably in that of Minnis' sister and her husband, Mr William Lowry, of 15 Bloomfield Road.

A New Local Church

At a meeting on lst March 1939 a local church was constituted in that home and on 5th March the first members meeting was held. In all seventeen names appear on the roll as foundation members. Minnis was appointed as

honorary pastor and his brother Fred along with a Mr James Spence, formerly a member of East End Baptist Church were elected as his fellow elders.

At a subsequent meeting in 15 Bloomfield Road it was decided to purchase a piece of ground at the top end of the Bloomfield Road and to build a meeting place. Plans proceeded apace and the builder appointed was the church secretary, Mr John Bell, who had erected the Strandtown Baptist Church. He was assisted by voluntary labour from among the members and adherents. The land was purchased from the Blakiston-Houston Estate Ltd. who owned what was then known as Orangefield Estate, hence the name given to the new church - Orangefield Baptist Church (Calvinistic). It was not to become a member of the Baptist Union of Ireland until 1944.

On the 28th June 1939 the new building was opened with a Service of Thanksgiving and the first of the regular services was held on 2nd July. Throughout the following two months the work prospered. Church services were well attended, the new building attracting the attention of outsiders, and a Sunday School work got off to a good start.

The clouds of war, however, were gathering. Germany invaded Poland and on 3rd September 1939 Britain and France declared war on the aggressor. Thus began at the time of the birth of that local church, the Second World War, a conflict in which more than forty-six million soldiers and civilians were to perish, many in circumstances of prolonged and horrifying cruelty. In a manner, too, that had never before been experienced the effects of that global conflict were to be borne in upon the Province of Ulster. Tragedy, bereavement and general suffering were brought into homes of members of that little church. Indeed who would have forseen that the building itself would be damaged by enemy action?

III. 1940 ...Conflicts of Evil

World War Two involved virtually every part of our planet during the years 1939-45. The principal belligerents were the Axis Powers - Germany, Italy and Japan - and the Allies - Britain, France, the United States, and to a lesser extent, China and most importantly, after a volte face, - the Soviet Union. The conflict was in many respects a continuation, after an uneasy twenty year

hiatus, of the disputes left unsettled by the First World War. Significantly our Diarist had lived throughout those years of distant hostilities. Indeed 1918 had marked not only the Armistice but the completion of his schooling and his entry into the field of employment. He was deeply conscious of the fact, and shared a general perplexity, that the country should have to endure another war. Writing some years later (4.8.43) he records ... "29th-Anniversary of start of first World War - the war which was to end war. Little did we think that 25 years later we would be faced by the same enemy".

Battle Engaged

Our Author commences his diary for 1940 with the following general comments. They indicate not only his awareness of the extreme gravity of the situation facing the nation but also his firm and unwavering conviction that good would ultimately triumph over evil.

"This year opens upon a Europe engaged in the most fateful struggle in human history. Germany yet again has forced this peace-loving nation to resort to war in order to preserve in Europe the things without which the nations would be better to perish. 1940 will be a never-to-be-forgotten year before we reach its close. A terrible cry of anguish will be heard from the peoples of the great nations of the West. It will surely, however, be followed by the welcome shout of victory as the gates of freedom and tolerance open once again. We do not know but this year may witness the consummation of all things with the Lord descending from heaven. Give me grace, O God, in the interval to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ".

Most significantly, his first entry for 1940 refers to Sir Winston S Churchill of whom he was a consummate admirer... (27.1.40) "Heard W. S. Churchill over the radio speaking from the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. It was a rousing call to arms to all peoples of the Empire".

Churchill had remained out of the government for the previous ten years although he had continued to hold a seat in parliament and he had repeatedly warned of the growing menace of Hitler and the prospect of German aggression. In 1939 he had been re-appointed to leadership of the Admiralty and, after Germany invaded the Low Countries, he was installed as Prime

Minister. Minnis had avidly followed his previous incident-packed life of statesmanship and adventure and, in common with the great majority of the populace, recognised that the country was full of fight but needed a firm leader. In that particular broadcast to which he refers, and which had so impressed him, Winston Churchill pointed the way forward with the words... "From the shameful records of the Germans' mass executions in Poland we may judge what our fate would be if we fall into their clutches. But from them also we may draw the force and inspiration to carry forward on our journey and not to pause or rest till liberation is achieved and justice done".

Gathering Clouds

A hard dreary road, however, lay ahead and it became increasingly perceived by the nation and our allies generally that the path to ultimate victory would indeed be a long one. In these diaries the progress of the aggressor westward across the continent of Europe is well chronicled... (9.4.40) "Germany invades Denmark and Norway" (10.5.40) "Germany invades Holland and Belgium". Moreover, the evocative references, (28.5.40), "Belgian Army surrenders unconditionally" and (17.6.40), "French Army ceases to fight" recall for those who themselves lived through those momentous days the memory of a very real and justified fear of an impending enemy landing on our own shores. The entry, pregnant with meaning, for 10.7.40, "The danger of German invasion is imminent" is no attempted rhetorical flourish. At midnight on 2nd June the last of the British and French troops had been evacuated from Dunkirk and there followed the fall of France and their signing of an armistice on 22nd June. Thus a sixth nation had succumbed to Germany in less than six months.

Critical Aerial Combat

His entry, (15.8.40), "Battle of Britain in full swing" marks the day on which the German Air Force pitted all its strength in a crucial test. On the first day of that month Hitler, in a directive regarding the conduct of air and sea warfare against England, had called for "an intensification of the air war". He further decreed that the invasion would take place on 15th September and that, as a preparation, a week-long bombing attack on the south of England would do substantial damage to the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and

essential harbours. Accordingly on 13th August, Germany launched its fourth campaign in less than a year. But unlike the other three previous attacks on Poland, Scandanavia, France and the Low Countries this was an air attack without any ground-based activity. It was the planned "Day of the Eagle", a day on which wave after wave of German aircraft, 1485 in all, flew in search of air-fields and aircraft factories which had now to be destroyed and destroyed quickly if the invasion was to follow.

Minnis' entry on that momentous August day, (15.8.40). "RAF bag 144 out of 1,000 raiders is a quote from figures issued by the British Information Services and were deceptively boosted in an effort to raise the nation's morale. It is now acknowledged that the more accurate statistics for that day of crucial battle was 75 German aircraft shot down for the loss of 34 British planes. It was,however, a privation that could not long have been sustained by the enemy. Accordingly the Germans were forced to reduce the level of their attack on the 17th and on the five days of intensive air onslaught between 13th and 18th August Hitler had failed to fulfil his one condition of invasion, namely, the breaking of Britain's air power. Two days later in the House of Commons, Churchill voiced the nation's gratitude in memorable words, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few".

Upward Look

Several long years of conflict, however, lay ahead and further entries in the diary for this year chronicle the continued efforts and successes of the enemy to inflict the maximum damage upon the civilan population as well as its legitimate armed targets. We read, (7.9.40) "Terrible German air raid on London. Hundreds killed and great damage done", again, (13.9.40) "Buckingham Palace bombed. All night and day air raid on London", (23.9.40) "German U Boat sinks without warning 600 miles from Canada a ship carrying 90 little children from bombed Britain. Only 13 survivors. World is horrified".

The Prime Minister had asserted (28.5.40), "As before, we shall through disaster move towards victory" and we read further (24.5.40), "King George VI broadcast a noble message to Empire tonight at 9 o'clock". But for many, as for Minnis Mills, confidence based solely on the exhortations of the nation's

mortal leaders was not enough. The King is credited with the suggestion that special days of prayer be designated so that the nation could acknowledge its need of divine help. One such occsion is referred to, (8.9.40) "National Day of Prayer". The response was encouraging and many of the churches across the denominations joined together in corporate prayer. Our attention is drawn (22.7.40) to the text in the Times Newspaper of that day: "Keep me O LORD from the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from the violent man who hath purposed to overthrow my goings" (Psalm 140 verse 4). There was indeed much in the happenings of those days to encourage people to a serious consideration of divine truth. For our Diarist, printed in capital letters is his own witness (24.5.40). "THE LORD IS AT HAND" and he gladly testifies to the fact that God had given him the promise..(17.6.4), "When the enemy comes in like a flood the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him". (Isaiah 59 verse 19).

A Growing Church

Repeated reference is made to the Lord's blessing on the infant church at Orangefield. We read, (5.2.40) "Small but good prayer meeting. Preached on 'The Sacrifice of Praise'." and (11.2.40) "Much encouragement at Orangefield today. 11.30 am (Subject) "The Army of God's Choosing". Further (7.7.40), "Very encouraging meetings at Orangefield today. The power of God was present". This frequent use of the word "encouragement" is further echoed in such phrases as.. (27.10.40), "Day of much blessing" and (24.11.40), "Day of rich blessing".

The practice of prayer was prominent among that little band of members, e.g. (16.3.40), "Special prayer meeting at 6 pm", and, (5.5.40), "Day of Intercession at Orangefield". Minnis, still acting as the honorary pastor, was greatly blessed by being surrounded with a faithful band of helpers who possessed a variety of gifts. Such names as Messers W McAlonen, GH Fieldhouse and N Porter appear among those who shared in the teaching and preaching ministry and most notable of all, in this connection, is the frequent contribution made by his brother and fellow elder, Fred Arnot. On many occasions they stood in for him, when he accepted "outside engagements". Such place names as Crosscollyer Street, Iron Hall and Church Street East occur, indicating his acceptability across a considerable spectrum of

"theological divergence". Indeed it becomes increasingly apparent as the years proceed that his exposition of the Scriptures coupled with his warm-hearted preaching of the Good News was widely sought after and greatly appreciated by many.

Home Commitments

Minnis was in every sense of the term "a family man". A love of his own kith and kin and a deep consciousness of his responsibility towards them all was part of his general make up. A great affection for father and mother was extended to the whole family circle and a special place was reserved for his nephew Harvey Lowry. On (19.10.40) he records Harvey's departure for service with the Armed Forces; "Harvey left at 6.30 today to join the RAF in England. May the good hand of the Lord be upon him and may he be daily conscious of it wherever on wings he may go". He was not then aware of the tragic fact that that young man would be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice.

His own immediate family, of course, were central. The first mention of his "firstborn" occurs near the beginning of the year. (2.2.40). "My 36th birthday. The goodness of God has been great to me through the years to this very hour. Spent evening at home with Gladys and Dorothy". His marriage was blessed by the gift of three children. Dorothy being born in 1935. Manton in 1940 and Pauline in 1943.

We read (25.3.40) "Spent today helping wife at home". This, uncharacteristically for our author, was something of an overstatement. He was competent at washing the dishes, but anything in the line of cooking was definitely outside his province and he would not have known where the vacuum cleaner was kept. He was very good, however, in bringing Gladys her breakfast to bed and revelled in sharing with the children his love of the great outdoors. The entry for 26.3.40 is typical, "Took little Dorothy over the hills for a walk. She thinks it's good getting out with Dad and Dad thinks so too. Easter was quiet for us but very pleasant and restful. His mercies are manifold".

On 17.5.40 he records the birth of his son. "Our second child was born tonight at 10.30. We gave him the honorable name of John Owen Manton.

May it please our Father in heaven to unite in our dear little son something of the piety and grace and talents of these two great men for the glory of His great name. I think Gladys is delighted that it is a son this time".

These "two great men" - John Owen and John Manton were Puritan stalwarts of the seventeenth century who had stood firmly for biblical authority and the unity of the Scriptures. Their influence is frequently reflected in the voluminous writings of CH Spurgeon to which, as already noted, Minnis had earlier been introduced. We notice, further, his continuing interest in such writings; (22.17.40)."Sunday School social. Church packed. I got Dr Warfield's book". This work referred to must be "Inspiration and Authority of the Bible", written by BB Warfield, who in 1861 had succeeded AA Hodge as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Seminary. His scholarly work had been published at a time when higher critical views of Scripture and evolutionary conceptions of religion were replacing evangelical convictions in most of America's major institutions of higher learning. Minnis, always an avid reader who burnt the candle at both ends by staying up often as late as two or three in the morning and rising early, was undoubtedly deriving great pleasure and benefit from his continued study.

Towards the end of that year we still find an acknowledgement of God's goodness to this young church; (24.11.40), "A day of rich blessing at Orangefield". On the final Sunday of December, however, he records in a typical self critical manner the comment, "Very poor meetings today. No spiritual power. Why?". Nevertheless he is able to report a well attended and very encouraging Watchnight Service and he closes his diary with words of gratitude and testimony; "The all sufficient grace of Christ has amazed me during this momentous year of 1940".

IV "Alarms and Excursions"

No diary exists for the year 1941. It is most likely none was written and if such be the case there is a good reason. The previous autumn the wail of air raid sirens began to sound in the Province, principally alerting the citizens of its capital to the possibility that Belfast was about - to become a front-line target. The stage was set for a devastating German blitzkrieg of the city throughout the months of April and May 1941.

The consequences of such direct enemy action can only be described as cataclysmic. In terms of the population of the city some 56,000 homes were hit, 3200 of them being completely destroyed. Over 100,000 were made homeless and thousands were fed in emergency rest centres. The great cost, of course, was in the loss of life itself. Almost 1,000 people perished and 2,500 were injured, many of them seriously. In all Belfast suffered four separate raids during which 1,000 metric tonnes of explosive fell on the city. The word 'blitz' with its connotations of sudden terrifying aerial attack is indeed appropriate.

Harbinger of Desolation

We read (25.10.40), "N Ireland has first air raid warning of the war". Belfast's first public air raid warning on that Friday evening towards the end of October brought the war dramatically nearer home and provided its citizens with their first real test of nerve. Amazingly, it was not reported in the press, most headlines being dominated by the Duke of Kent's first visit to Ulster and claims that mass raiders had been routed over London, Liverpool and south-east Scotland. The sirens erupted just after 10.00 pm. Popoular reaction to this unfamiliar clamour varied. Some stood on doorsteps casually chatting and speculating over its possible cause and listening eagerly for the "all clear" of the sirens. Any symptoms of panic and anxiety that did exist on the part of some were largely dispelled by the reassuring patterns of more mere warnings that followed. Indeed, between October 1940 and the first actual raid on the night of 7th April 1941, the sirens sounded almost twenty times and each was a false alarm.

The following day (26.10.40) a warning was again given. By means of an entry for that date the reader is enabled to obtain a personal glimpse into the effect that alarm had on the Mills' household. Listening to the wail of the siren was an eerie sensation and one can sympathise with Gladys Mills, that young mother, as she sat alone in the home with her infant children. A paternal obligation however, was fulfilled and the need met... "Went to Young People's Meeting to hear Mr McCracken. Just as he was about to speak the air raid warning went. Had to leave at once. Went home as I promised to do".

In that same month of October 1940 the German war machine had turned to the tactic of major aerial bombardment of British cities. Whilst the cities on the mainland experienced nightly raids, Belfast was still all but ignored by the Luftwaffe. It was believed that the distance from Northern France was deemed by the enemy as too great to risk planes running out of fuel on the return flight. It was also thought that Eire's neutrality and its territorial claims to the entire island of Ireland would dissuade the German attacks and indeed that Hitler would not risk Eire's neutral stance by a blitz on the North. Ominous indications, however, began to appear that the German High Command was directing more of its attention towards Northern Ireland. From August 19 high ranking civil servants at Stormont had been concerned at mounting rumours and reports of enemy reconnaissance planes being sighted over the Six Counties and it was suspected that they were using the southern Irish coast to escape detection.

There was much in the Province's capital to attract the attention of the enemy. Back in 1935 Britain had commenced re-armament and the following year Belfast was chosen by the Imperial Parliament as a major area of aircraft production. By the end of 1940 some 206 aircraft had been delivered and the factory of Short Brothers & Harland Ltd at Sydenham was being described as "the finest seaplane manufacturing base in the British Isles". Belfast's other major source of war endeavour was of course the shipyards, primarily that of Harland & Wolff. Northern Ireland was also producing other commodities which were of value to the war effort. James Mackie & Sons were re-equipped in 1938 with modern American machinery and had commenced the manufacture of munitions. In addition the Sirocco Works at the Bridge End were producing heating and ventilation plant for the underground munitions factories in England, whilst linen manufacturers, Combe Barbour, was continuing to work upon similar lines to those employed in the first World War.

Initial Attacks

We read in the previous year's diary (13.9.40), "Bangor bombed". On that date a lone Luftwaffe bomber which had unsuccessfully attacked some ships in Belfast Lough flew over Bangor, Co Down and dropped about twenty incendiary bombs, mostly on the Main street of that seaside town.

Some three months into the new year of 1941 the first raid on Belfast itself, albeit a minor one, took place on the night of 7/8th April. It is likely that a few planes were detached from a major raid on Clydeside to attack Belfast in an effort to test the defences prior to a major assault. Their bombs were extremely accurate, perhaps due to previous reconnaissance flights over the capital. A major fire was started in McCue Dick's timber yard in Duncrue Street and Rank's Flour Mill was destroyed. The Victoria Shipyards at Harland & Wolff and the Alexandra works were severely damaged. In the east of the city many hundreds of incendaries were dropped on the Newtownards Road area, seriously damaging St Patrick's Church of Ireland. Altogether twelve fires raged in the Ballymacarett district. Other residential housing areas close to the docks which suffered damage were the Shore Road and Northern Road. Thirteen people were killed and twenty three seriously injured.

Orangefield Baptist Church Bombed

The roads were cleared within two or three days and by the following weekend, Easter weekend, the population was once again settling down to normality. Thousands of trippers took the County Down Railway to Bangor to enjoy the fine weather. The following day, Easter Tuesday, many who had gone away for the whole weekend were returning home in preparation for work the following day. Few of them noticed a lone Junkers 107 reconnaissance plane fly over the city. Some residents did see it and they expressed their fears that the enemy would return in force that night.

That evening around 200 German bombers did indeed leave their bases in Northern France and the Dutch Lowlands. As a result of the carnage they were to inflict on Belfast that night of 15th April 1941, it can be said that no other city in the United Kingdom, save London and except perhaps also Liverpool, lost so many of its citizens in one single night's raid. 900 were to die with another 1,500 injured, 400 of them seriously. The primary target for the bombers was the industrial base of the city, but the shipyards and docks area, however, were relatively unscathed, the bulk of the damage being to the homes of the populace. The Ulster Hospital in Templemore Avenue, which had suffered minor incendiary damage in the previous raid, was hit by a large bomb which completely destroyed the new wing. Perhaps the worst single incident occured after the bombing of York Street Mill. Most of the wall on

one side of the mill collapsed on top of the small mill houses in Sussex and Vere streets. Altogether 42 homes in the former street and 21 in the latter were destroyed with the loss of 35 lives. Also in the Shankill district a large number were killed in an air-raid shelter located outside Percy Street Gospel Hall. A bomb fell about 15 feet from the shelter demolishing it. About 60 people died. The story of destruction, panic, courage and carnage continued in almost every small street in north Belfast.

Only some parts of east Belfast experienced death and destruction comparable in extent to the stricken areas north of the city. A large parachute-mine believed to have been aimed at Mackie's Foundry skimmed over the top of its assumed target. Seconds later it landed on the vulnerable, poor but well-kept terraced houses of Tamar Street and Carew Street. Many intense fires were started and, at the height of that ferocious attack, Orangefield Baptist church building was struck by an incendiary bomb which penetrated the roof. Fire-watchers, however, on duty in the district, acted with so promptly that not much damage was sustained. Indeed a broken roof tile and a smashed handbasin was the only outcome. However, in addition, a high-explosive bomb narrowly missed the building, burying itself in the church grounds but failing to explode. The building was closed for a number of days whilst a bomb disposal squad set to work and rendered the bomb harmless. In the preservation of the building the members acknowledged the good hand of Almighty God and a Service of Thanksgiving was held.

The city mortuary was unable to cope with the large number of bodies. In an attempt to ease the situation, corpses were also taken to St George's Market near to Cromac Square and to the Falls Road Swimming Baths. In the Baths the bodies initially arrived in coffins and were laid out round the pool. However the city quickly ran out of coffins and the baths became so full that bodies had to be accommodated in the emptied swimming pool itself. The weekend after the bombing there was a public funeral for 150 of the dead, 123 of whom were still unidentified.

Two Final Raids

The Germans did not give the city much respite before launching a further assault on Belfast. At 11.45pm on the night of 4th May the air raid

sirens once again warned of the approach of enemy aircraft. This attack was known as the "Fire Blitz" due to the number of incendiary bombs used. The bombers dropped over 200 metric tonnes of explosives but in addition the city was sprinkled with almost 96,000 incendary bombs. Major damage was inflicted on the harbour estate, the shipyards and the aircraft factories. The raid had been planned as an attack upon the industrial capacity of Belfast and from the enemy's point of view was a success.

Once again, however, the civilian areas of the city suffered, many of them still recovering from the April raid, their proximity to the major target area making them vulnerable. The churches of the city too did not remain unscathed. Clifton Street Presbyterian and Duncairn Methodist churches were destroyed. In addition to those two churches three hospitals were hit. The Benn Hospital at Clifton Street was damaged and the Ulster Hospital at Templemore Avenue was all but completely destroyed. Further out to the east, Military Hospital No 24, situated at Campbell College was also bombed. Casualties were low compared with the previous raid. Nevertheless 150 were killed with 157 seriously injured.

The following night, 5/6th May, the air raid warning once again sounded. Three or four bombers presumably strays from the major force which was attacking Clydeside, dropped bombs on the city. The red alert sounded just after midnight and was not cancelled until 3.30pm. That night, too, was not without its tragedy. A parachute mine was dropped on East Belfast, falling near to communal shelters in Ravenscroft Avenue. These collapsed with the loss of 14 lives, a considerable number also being injured.

Though it was not realised at the time that attack was, in the mercy of God, the last onslaught on Belfast. From mid-May 1941 air raids on the west and southwest of England became less frequent. This was related to events on mainland Europe, notably the German invasion of Russia. German troops crossed the Russian border on 24th June 1941 and this opening up of the Eastern Front necessitated on the part of the enemy high command a complete rethinking of its bombing strategy against the United Kingdom. Mercifully for our Province, Northern Ireland targets became for the Germans much less of a priority. Increasingly they found that all their available resources were needed elsewhere.

Evacuation

Obviously, this cessation of direct hostilities against the Six Counties was not then known to be the case. There existed, rather, a very real and deep-seated dread and, on the part of many, the firm expectation that "the bombers would be back" and that the traumas already experienced would be just the precursors of more desolation and death to come.

As a consequence on the morning after the 15-16th April attack the Government initiated a major plan to evacuate the city. This "Hiram Plan" as it was called was to relieve the pressure of population upon Belfast's resources. On that day it was estimated that some 40,000 people were homeless and that 70,000 had to be fed in special centres set up for the purpose. An immediate exodus started from the city. Over 100,000 people left Belfast for other parts of the Province and special trains took others to Dublin. The town of Dromore, for example, saw the population increase from 500 to 2000. In such outlying districts many thousands of Belfast citizens took refuge with friends or strangers. A fundamental cause of this crash evacuation was FEAR, the fear of further bombing and an urge to escape from houses which were manifestly so vulnerable.

Inevitably the two further May raids accelerated this mass exodus which had begun after the Easter attack. According to one official estimate during late May and early June 1941, the number of evacuees, both voluntary and government-organised, peaked at over 220,000. Certainly at least one third of the population of the city was at that time sleeping beyond its boundaries.

Nocturnal Migrations

Not all, however, chose to evacuate and leave Belfast so permanently. Rather many thousands who, although they did not necessarily live in dangerous areas none the less refused to sleep in their own homes at night. Instead they sought safety in the outskirts of the city. They "lifted their eyes to the hills" as offering a place of safety and sought out the barns of friendly farmers. Some, who became known as "ditchers", even slept for a time in fields and hedges, some staying till dawn while others returned in the early hours of the morning when they considered that the likelihood of an air-raid

had passed. The popular wisdom was that "if the Germans had not arrived by one o'clock in the morning then they would not come".

All the major roads leading out of Belfast witnessed that nightly exodus. Particularly dense numbers could be seen along the Braniel Road as far as Ballygowan and a great many trekked up the Craigantlet Road to the hills or by the Newtownards Road towards Dundonald Village. Some main roads, however, did not attract ditchers for a variety of reasons. The Holywood Road remained unpopular owing to its proximity to Sydenham airport and because bombs had fallen there in early May. Similarly the presence of two demolished houses on the Comber Road served as a deterrent.

Home In A Stable

Minnis Mills, writing his diary a year later, recalled the raid of the 4/5th May when among other targets the harbour estate suffered much damage. Scarcely a single building was left unscathed in the nearby Corporation Street area of the city. One structure however, left virtually intact, was the premises of his new employer. That morning, following the enemy action, he had made his way to the city centre, picking a path through through the rubble - strewn streets, and was glad to find that he had a place, of work to attend. We read (4.5.42), "I have been with the firm of Wm. Finlay & Sons one year today. On that morning many buildings were still burning furiously after a terrible three hour raid by the Nazis, but Finlay's was untouched. For this I thanked God".

In common with others he had been anxious to provide safe accommodation for his family, believing that the whole of the city, especially after that terrifying Easter Tuesday night raid, would be flattened by returning bombers. So, in company with his brother-in-law William Lowry, he set out to look for somewhere to stay. Whether or not they were following up some lead and acting on information received they ended up in the Temple area of the country just outside Lisburn. There at Ballycarngannon they found a farmer's wife who had "accommodation available". The lodging on offer was a large upper room above the horses' stable which they learnt they could rent provided they supplied their own furniture.

'Thus it was that the extended family of the Mills and the Lowrys, the four parents and their five children took up immediate residence in the new abode. A minimum of chattels were somehow transported to the site and at night a curtain was hung to divide the room for the two families. So the youngest, little baby Manton, not then six months old was put to sleep above the stable. It was by no stretch of the imagination an ideal provision but it was a tremendous relief for them to know that they would not be roused from their beds by the foreboding wail of the sirens.

Investigation of the farm out-buildings revealed a half empty tool shed. It housed a plough but they were told they could make use of it as a kitchen provided they cleared and cleaned it out. The offer was taken up and fortunately, after a couple of weeks enduring such privation, the threat of terminating the contract resulted in a "lengthening of their cords" to extend their camping into two additional rooms within the main farm building itself.

It was obviously a trying time for all concerned, not least for the two house-wives who had to make do with the very inadequate facilities. As far the wage earners were concerned work still awaited them in the city and young Margaret, the eldest of the Lowry girls, had obtained employment with the firm of McCaw, Stevenson & Orr, printers on the Castlereagh Road. She, along with her father and uncle, had an early breakfast of cornflakes and cold milk before leaving at six o'clock to cycle into town to work. They returned in the evening by the same mode of transport. In addition, Pastor Mills had his continuing responsibilities in the Orangefield church. Little Dorothy with her two cousins walked each day the two miles to attend the local primary school.

The Mills family were the first to return to the more normal living in their own home in the city. The Lowries for their part remained in the country for a longer time and it is not till February of the following year that we read (7.2.42), "Nellie brought the furniture back from Ballycarnagannon today". Thus ended the most momentous year of 1941. Surprisingly, in the subsequent diaries we find little mention made of those truly horrifying experiences endured by both the family and that local church. We read (4.1.42), "This New Year finds us still living at No.9 Orangefield Crescent". To a great

extent life had indeed returned to normal and, typically of the man, Minnis expresses his gratitude to the Lord - "I am humbled yet thankful that God has permitted me to continue as minister of God's Word. May I be found faithful".

V. 1942. Danger-shadowed Clouds

The diary for this year is opened by a quotation from words of General Douglas MacArthur, "Only those who are willing to die are fit to live". This "motto" originally addressed to soldiers was much in Minnis Mill's mind as he reflected on all the tragedy and suffering he himself had just witnessed throughout the previous months. He was conscious of the fact that that those words could equally be addressed to the whole civilian population around him; Ulster was in the front line.

On the 4th day of the new month he also penned his thoughts and expectations for the incoming year and he concludes with a heartfelt prayer to God:

"1942 promises to be one of the most fateful and eventful in human history. All the great powers are engaged in mortal struggle. Gt Britain and her empire, Russia, USA, China and several South American Republics are now united as one against Germany, Italy and Japan. 1941 was a year of great peril and suffering for Britain. In the early part of the year her great cities and ports were subjected to air attacks almost nightly. But the courage of the people never flinched, their hope of final victory was present with them in the darkest hour. The great leadership of Churchill has inspired the whole Empire. His words in Parliament and over the radio have stirred the soul of the Nation as never before. We thank God for the great man. May he be spared to see his efforts crowned by complete victory. Churchill is now in Washington with President Roosevelt and has addressed the American and Canadian Senates. May God grant us victory and peace this, year. May God who hath torn, bind up, by sending His ambassadors in fulness of power to those tortured lands and so cause the wrath of man to praise Him. This New Year finds us still living at No.9 Orangefield Crescent. I am humbled yet thankful that God has permitted me to continue a minister of God's Word. May I be found faithful".

Higher Authority

In these memoirs the reader is able to trace in the Author's comments the progress of the continuing conflict. He records (2.2.42), "The great battle for Singapore begins" and some two weeks later (17.2.42), "Churchill makes a statement on escape through the English Channel of German battleships and also about the fall of Singapore. Still further setbacks to the Allied cause continue to be registered as the months pass. (2.3.42), "Shipping losses have risen alarmingly" and (30.6.42), "Rommell pushing very fast through Egypt".

All, however, is not doom and gloom. Help was at hand (7.1.42), "President Roosevelt made a great speech last night and said America would produce 60.000 planes,40,000 tanks and 8 million tons of shipping in 1942". This is followed by (26.1.4), "Americans arrive in N Ireland, the vanguard of a vast army. Nemesis is overtaking the guilty men of Berlin" and (10.2.42), "American soldiers on traffic duty in Belfast. They attracted great attention".

It was realised however that assistance of a different nature was also and more importantly, required. Our author expressed the regret (2.3.42), "No powerful voice has yet been heard in our nation calling the people back to God". Nevertheless Christians themselves were deeply conscious as to where an adequate answer lay to the needs of the individual and to the nation as a whole. as we see in the following entry (25.3.42), "was at Jocelyn Street Prayer Meeting called to prayer for Nation and Empire".

Indeed the whole future for the Allied cause began to look somewhat brighter as the record testifies. (20.7.42), "British 8th Army counterattack in Egypt. Rommel may be hard put to stay his ground. Again, (10.6.42), UN take the offensive in SW Pacific with an American landing in the Solomon Islands now occupied by Japan. Red army still retreating but sternly resisting all Nazi attacks upon the city of Stalingrad. It may prove another Moscow".

On 3.9.42 he writes, "3rd Anniversary of Britain's declaration of war on Germany" and gratefully acknowledges both the Lord's goodness and also a more general awareness,on the part of a growing number of the nation's dependence on him... "thanks due to Almighty God for great deliverances during these terrible years. At times it seemed as if our history was about to

end in crushing defeat. Timely help never failed to arrive. We have suffered grievous losses but never was Britain more resolved to overcome the tyrant than she is today. The King calls the nation to prayer. Attended meeting in Assembly Hall [Presbyterian] at 8.00pm".

Local Church Renewed

The first entry of the new year had included a reference to the work in Orangefield, which had evidently returned to normal. (4.1.42). "A most encouraging meeting this morning," and there are frequent expressions of thankfulness to God for His continued blessing. (8.3.42), "Meetings in church most encouraging today. Much liberty in preaching - may God give the increase. Offerings 92 shillings" ... and (26.4.42), "Another Sabbath, blessed day. Probably the largest meeting since church opened".

The members were led to plan and conduct, as a church, their first Gospel Mission. This was held in the month of November, 11th till 29th. It was preceded by a week of special prayer and they were anticipating "a time of blessing". Pastor David Hood from the Bangor Church was invited as the preacher and we learn that "the word was earnest and powerful". "Each night the attendance increased." and it was "a time of great heart searching". The final meeting is recorded as being "a memorable day" and at the conclusion of that special evangelistic effort Minnis expresses the prayer... "O God, grant mercifully, that this but begins a mighty work of grace in this church". Later on Boxing Day of that year they held their first conference and David Hood was invited back as the speaker.

The Lord was also blessing in the work among the children. The Sunday School was described as "large" and 30th January was the date of their annual social. Minnis comments.. "It's grand to see such a company of children after the scattering". Evidently the evacuees had returned with the cessation of the bombing and it must indeed have been encouraging for all concerned to have not only signs of normality but of God's favour. At that time names on the SS roll included those of Danny Blanchflower and Billy Bingham. Those football protegés from east Belfast were later to win well-earned fame for themselves in that popular sport. Their teachers were also able to rejoice in coming years to see evidence of the attainment of other pupils in higher fields of service.

Personal Commitment

We see right from the commencement of that year that the leader of the work in that local church was himself searching his own heart and was desirous of a yet deeper experience of the Lord's work in his own life. The entry for 9.1.42 enables us to understand something of his inner thoughts:

I cannot read His future plans,
But this I know
I have the smiling of His face
And all the refuge of his grace
While here below.

"Read a searching letter by Rev John Bonar on the nature of Revival. O that God would rend the heavens and come down. Britain sorely needs revival, so does the church, so do I. May it come in much power".

What he writes the following day is also informative. Evidently in some particular respect he was being confronted with a problem whether it was in his own personal life or in that of the church. He was being challenged to make a hard decision. (18.1.42), "A very needed word came with great power to my heart: "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good". To do this, great grace will be required, it will mean acting in opposition to the seemingly legitimate desires of self, the popular course pursued by the men of the world". He then adds revealingly, "and sometimes it must be performed against the wishes of our loved ones. But He who gave the commandment will give grace to put it into action when the call comes. O for strength". Within that same week he utters the further prayer to God: "O to have the fulness of the spirit and so have power with God. Would that I had done with half-heartedness and was being every day thoroughly in earnest".

He was ever seeking life on a higher plain and it was the spiritual strength of the man that he was willing to search his own heart and acknowledge how often he fell short of his Master's standard. He writes, (31.5.42), "Small meetings in Orangefield. No power, a message with no conviction, a very humbling experience". Such decisive moments continued as the Lord maintained a deepening work of grace in his heart. Minnis tells us, (9.6.42),

"In the midst of a spiritual crisis. Long greatly for a deeper knowledge God. 'Quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy word'. Spiritual power is my greatest need".

Hard Labour

To lead such a work and still continue with his secular employment must have been a daunting and taxing task. We can understand his thoughts when we read, (6.2.42), "That I am able to continue this work in the church is surely a matter of praise". The arrival of the July "Twelfth" Week's holiday was welcomed, at the end of which he records, (20.7.42), "Back to business, glad of rest",and he received an uplift of another nature at the end of the year, (4.12.42), a pleasant surprise today. Increase of ten shillings in salary. Truly I must raise my Ebenezer".

His task of course was considerably eased by the fact that he was frequently away from his own pulpit because he accepted preaching appointments in a variety of other churches. Thus he did not have to sustain an unremitting ministry in his own church. On New Year's Eve for example he exchanged with a neighbouring minister. (5.1.42), "Learned today that last night's service in Orangefield was most encouraging. Although a very wet and dark night the church was almost full and Mr McCracken preached with much power".

A frequent preacher was also Mr William Brown from Shankill Baptist Church and another very welcome visitor was Principal James Willoughby. He was a native of Shillelagh, Co Wicklow and a graduate of TCD. As well as pastoring several churches he had been principal of both the Irish Baptist College and the Strict Baptist Bible Institute in England. Retiring from his last post in 1938,and being a bachelor he had returned to live with relatives in Belfast. His ministry in Orangefield is described, (12.7.42), as "uplifting and stimulating", and when not himself preaching he regularly worshipped in the congregation.

Minnis was also blessed by having within his own membership in Orangefield several who were talented, not only in leading and 'giving a word' at the mid-week service, but also of sharing the preaching ministry on the

Sabbath. He was obviously glad, as a true pastor, to encourage them to develop their gifts for the good of the whole church.

He was, however, very conscious that he was trying to "hold down two jobs at once" and the strain of those twin responsibilities weighed heavily upon him. In the spring of that year the opportunity presented itself of a change in his secular employment. This possible move had its attractions as it offered promotion in a business career and an increase in salary. We read in a succession of entries recorded throughout that period of time, (2.4.42 etc.), "Had interview with Mr Northridge of Belfast Damask Linen Co, Wellington Place": "Wrote to Mr. Northridge accepting offered salary. Further interview. Accepted appointment but did not feel happy about decision". Finally, (15.4.42), "After much prayer and thought decided not to accept position". He further adds the meaningful words "as I feared it would prevent me giving my best to the church. He was learning much as he trod that pathway of "the obedience of faith". Self advancement was by grace relegated to a secondary position.

Theological Cross-culture

We learn that throughout these months invitations were accepted from several other churches, both Baptist, such as Banbridge and Church Street East, and from other denominations, including the Congregational Union of Ireland. It must be specially noted that he was a welcome and frequent guest speaker at meetings of the Christian Workers Union, notably at their North Belfast Branch on the Oldpark Road. This interdenominational work, with its many branches throughout the Province was vigorously evangelistic and had grown out of an original "Bangor Christian Workers Society" founded in 1878 by a Mr Samuel G Montgomery, a local business man who later in 1901 had acted as a referee for the young WP Nicholson to enter for training in the Bible Training Institute, Glasgow. As a result of missions the latter was to conduct in Ulster in the early 1920s, (see above) many CWUs had been formed. We read, (31.1.42). "Had largest meeting yet at the North Belfast, CW Union. Young woman told me she had accepted Christ at close. He that winneth souls is wise - Make me very wise, O Lord". The following month, (2.2.42), "Spoke at Union Hospital. Met a nurse who told me she was saved at a mission I held in N Belfast CWU".

The conducting of a mission over the course of several days was a heavy responsibility, especially as it involved the delivery of a gospel address on each successive night, and at the end of a day's secular employment. One such two weeks' undertaking lasted from 10th till 25th of May in Crosscollyer Street Evangelical Church. This evangelistic outreach got off to a good start. "Attendances were high" and "a good spirit prevailed". By the end of the mission, however, he "felt very tired" and as it drew to a close he records, (20.5.42), "Splendid support tonight from Botanic Avenue Evangelical Church and Orangefield yet I scarcely enjoyed five minutes liberty and felt my words were falling to the ground - a humbling experience". Nevertheless, the very next night he was able to write, "I preached on the Dying Thief. Little girl of twelve of twelve from Knock Evangelical sought the Saviour". This was indeed encouraging and the following night he was able to describe as "a memorable meeting".

A Sister Church

Reference must also be made to Pastor Mill's close and friendly association over many years with the Irish Evangelical Church (see above). In these diaries the name of this Presbyterian denomination first occurs, (10.2.40), "Was speaking in Irish Evangelical Church, Crosscollyer street". Subsequently, the names of various of their ministers appear, for example those of CH Garland and J McCracken. The latter was a visiting preacher in Orangefield and he and Minnis at times exchanged pulpits. McCracken's ministry was much appreciated, (27.3.42), "Young People's social - splendid. Mr McCracken gave a grand message. Two little girls told me they had trusted the Saviour". Later in 1944 he sailed with his wife and child to South Africa work to take charge of the Free Church Mission in that land.

Another of their ministers with whom Minnis had much in common was the Rev WJ Grier. He was an accomplished theologian who had studied for two years as a post-graduate at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey, USA. He was invited as the main speaker to Orangefield's second Annual Church Meeting and, (18.2.42), "Gave an inspiring address".

Family Bereavements

Just two weeks into the New Year we read, (15.1.42), "Willie (his brother-in-law) rang me up at 2.15 to say they had received a wire at 1.30 with the sad news that Harvey my nephew was missing and believed lost. This is indeed heavy tidings to us all. Only yesterday a letter was received from him and he was in high spirits. He considered himself honoured to be fighting in the great cause and he devoted himself to his job. I can't think he won't return again. Very many hours of joy he brought to Mother and me when he lived at Neill's Hill. He was a dear child and his company cheered our loneliness. Mother loved him dearly as if he had been her own. He was the last one Father recognised before he passed away. Little did we think as he climbed unto that bed that he would be the first to follow. He leaves us all only the most precious memories. He was a young gentleman. I have not any doubts that he is with the Lord and that through the merits of our Redeemer we shall meet in heaven. It is a heavy blow to Willie and Nellie. I feel specially for Willie he was so proud of his boy and he was in no doubt that Harvey was just as proud of his father. There will be consolation in this memory in days to come - 'age shall weary him nor the years condemn'."

When his father died in 1926 Minnis was unmarried. He then bought his first house at Neill's Hill, Sandown Road and thus provided a home for his widowed mother. He also brought to live with him his nephew, Harvey Lowry. (When his mother was expecting she was reading the life of Francis Ridley Havergal and hence decided on the name 'Harvey' for her first child). Harvey was the only boy in the family, having five sisters, and it was thought he would provide company for his grand-mother. This indeed turned out to be the case for he had a very special place in her affections especially as her first grandchild. When he left school he served his time in his father's employment learning the trade of boot and shoe repairing. Indeed even while still a schoolboy he had acquired a considerable skill in that work being anxious to assist his father, who throughout that period of very severe economic depression, was carrying on his business from the back of his home on the Bloomfield Road. In her own diary (see above) his devoted grandmother writes, (19th February 1935), "Willie is still very ill. Harvey the dear is one of the best children I ever knew. He didn't go to school today. He went out

on his Daddy's run and brought in twenty-five shillings worth of repairs. He got them done and then delivered them".

When the war started he had reached the age to volunteer for service with the Armed Forces and in common with so many young men of his generation he was most anxious to "join up and do his bit". At the first opportunity, he applied to the Royal Air Force and was accepted for training as a airgunner. Minnis records (19.10.40), the day he left home to join the RAF in England and one can imagine the thoughts of the whole family as they bade farewell to this young man who was so greatly loved by them all. They were much aware from the very first day that he had announced his desire to commit himself to such an endeavour that his life would be at risk in the service of his country. The previous week it was recorded, (28.9.40), that no less than 133 German planes had been destroyed over the south west of England and the Royal Air Force itself was daily suffering heavy casualties in its own varied areas of operations. Minnis' comments that same day of departure must have epitomised the thoughts in their minds and hearts. "May the good hand of the Lord be upon him and may he daily be conscious of it wherever he may go. Sergeant Harvey, as he was to become, remained true to his promise to keep in close touch with the family. Within the first month Minnis was pleased to record,(15.11.40), "Received first letter from Harvey today".

Just four days after.the Lowry family had learned that Harvey had been "reported missing" they received a letter from his Commanding Officer offering condolence and explaining how the young man had met his death. He and his pilot were flying over the Firth of Forth and for some unknown reason their plane had gone out of control and had plunged into the sea. Minnis records, (20.1.42), "there is now very little hope that Harvey is still alive. We all mourn his passing but not without much pride. He had a very high sense of duty and was determined to make his own little contribution to a very great victory. At the going-down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them".

The previous year while training at Castle Kennedy an RAF station near Stranraer, Wigtownshire, in a letter (20.10.41) to a friend he had written,

"Every time I ride up in the clouds that shadow so many dangers I always make a silent prayer in my heart that I shall receive the guidance of Him who rules the skies. That is why I (know) with conviction God has proved to me beyond any doubt that my life is in His hands so I will have to reside in this great comfort until I am worthy of a place in the greatest of services".

Pastor Mills was deeply conscious of his responsibility, and indeed of the privilege, of seeking to bring what comfort he could to his sorrowing family and so we read, (21.1.42), "Wrote to Mother today telling her that Margaret (Harvey's sister) and I would come to see her on Saturday. Called with Nellie. She spoke about the comfort of the scriptures", and, (21.1.42), "Margaret and I went on the train to see Mother. It was easily seen that she was grieving deeply over Harvey's death. It was no ordinary affection she had for her first grand-child. I feel we were able to bring her comfort". The great Comforter Himself was indeed true to His promise as witnessed by the entry of 29.1.42, "Splendid prayer meeting. Willie (Harvey's father) led and gave a good word. It's an inspiration to watch his conduct before God at this time of great trial. Truly divine grace is grace sufficient".

The pain, however, remained as the following entries show, (30.1.42), "Annual Sunday School Social Programme was very good. Many times I felt Harvey should have been present with us". And again, (7.2.42), "Nellie and Willie are still going through Valley of grief. Silently and swiftly this dear boy has forever passed from us. The realization that he will not return only comes gradually" and further, (14.6.42), "Six months since Harvey lost his life. His memory remains for ever".

There is a touching addition to that sad story and it concerns the action of a former RAF colleague of Harvey and it indicates the esteem in which he was held by those who served with him, (19.2.42), "Letter from Ted Smith to say he had ordered (Interflora) a wreath to be placed on Belfast Cenotaph, a token of this Englishman's respect. Went down to the Cenotaph at lunch time. A lovely wreath of daffodils had been placed with the inscription, "In honourable remembrance of Sgt JH Lowry, from Ted". Minnis was obviously deeply touched as he stood there alone during his midday break in the grounds of the City Hall and deeply mourned the passing of his much loved nephew. He himself added the comment, "There is something very beautiful about

this expression of esteem". He had obviously written Ted Smith expressing the thanks of the family because the following month he received from Lynton-on-Ouse, then head-quarters of an RAF Signals Squadron a letter (21.4.42) in reply from Ted in which he said, "I can assure you that there was no feeling of fear or resentment on Harvey's part that this should happen to him. He was proud to be in uniform doing his share to help straighten things out; he firmly believed that the time was ordained and that therefore his days were numbered. With this in mind he went about without any fear of death, knowing in his mind that life and death were things in hands far removed from mere human beings". The letter was signed Aircraftsman EB Smith.

Later that year his Uncle Minnis wrote of him:

"His sacrifice was great
But greater far the cause in which he fell.
Britain, ancient land of liberty
stood in awful jeopardy.
Her laws, her homes, her children dear,
her very right to worship God
Every sacred thought and thing
was challenged by the pagan foe.
Duty called for much, but not too
much for him to give,
For what he gave he wins
through all the years
Our love and admiration".

It was not long before Pastor Mills was called upon to minister to another family bereaved in very similar circumstances. This time it was to a young wife and her two small children, Terence and Lawrence, who attended the Orangefield Sunday School. Minnis records, (31.7.42), "News received this morning of Bobby Brown's death while serving in RAF. He leaves widowed mother, wife and two small boys. I well remember the night he repented and turned to God in Sandown Road Baptist Hall", further, (1.8.42), "Called to see Mrs Brown and found her greatly distressed. Has decided to bring her husband's body home and asked me to officiate at funeral. This is the first time I will have done so, but I have no doubt help and wisdom will be granted". He was thus faced with the responsibility of conducting an interment when

not just the whole family would be present but at which a branch of the armed services would be officially represented in the full spectacle of uniform and ceremony. Typically he prepared for that duty as an occasion when the Lord would be uplifted. He later writes, (4.8.42), "We laid to rest Bobby Brown's body at Dundonald. A great company attended. It was an opportunity of setting before many young men the glory of God's revelation". It is of interest to note in passing that an outcome of that funeral service in the church was that Orangefield was subsequently chosen as the venue for official church parades of young cadets, members of the Air Training Corps on several occasions. Minnis refers to their attendance at the services and expresses his pleasure at being able to minister the Gospel to them.

Just two months after Harvey Lowry's death, the Mills family was again in mourning with the passing of the Pastor's mother. We read, "Had intended not to go and see Mother until Easter, but felt constrained to go at once. Found her much worse than expected. She was very weak, I could not get her roused, but did not think her precious life was drawing to a close. Had I known, I would not have left her side". Then (28.3.42), "About 11am she entered into the immediate presence of her Redeemer to greet her dear ones, especially Father. Willie broke the news to me as I closed the morning service". And on the final day of that month, "Today all that was mortal of dear Mother was laid to rest at Knockbreda to await the last trump. My heart was heavy yet so very thankful that God had blessed me with a Mother so enriched with the spirit of Christ".

One member of the immediate family who was unable to attend was the Pastor's brother John Anderson. He had emigrated to Australia many years before and had never been back home. He had, however, kept in regular contact with his mother and family and the sad news was communicated to him by cable. Later Minnis records, (5.5.42), "Wrote to John today giving him full details of Mother's departure for home. How I should like to see him".

The memory of that godly mother and father long remained as is clear from the reading of these diaries. For example, (8.5.42) "At my parents' grave today. I gave myself afresh to the Lord. I want to serve God with the same devotion which characterised them". Weeks later he adds, (14.7.42),

"My dear parents much in my thoughts today. What a debt I owe them. I can only repay by endeavouring to love as they loved, and prayed I would. So help me God".

His was a love and devotion that was truly reciprocated. Ellen Mills had recorded in her own diary (see above) some of her inner thoughts. For example we read, (17.2.35), "It gives me real joy to listen to dear Minnis preach the gospel. I'm sure I feel unworthy of the honour of being his Mother". And again, (12.3.35), "It certainly is the greatest joy of my life to sit and listen to him declaring all the counsel of God so zealously. May the Lord bless him and his for His Name's sake". Behind Minnis was a praying Mother. That priceless gift from God explains much. On 15.2.35 she had written. "It's just forty four years today since I came to the city from the country. As I survey the past, how much I have to thank God for He was everything to me. When I had a minute to spare it found me on my knees in my own room and to this day I look back to that room as the place where I got strength for after years".

His diary for 1942 concludes with a reference to "first Christmas morning service in Orangefield". As a family they "spent a happy day at Nellie's, a great day for the children".

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THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

by Norman Shields

1. The Seeds of New Age

New Age is not new!

1. It gathers up ideas that go back centuries and which mostly come from the East (India etc). It has antecedents in several nineteenth century cults, like Christian Science, Theosophy and Unity School of Christianity, which postulate an underlying unity of all existence.

McDowell and Stewart go as far as to designate Theosophy 'the fountainhead of the new Age Movement' and go on to say that its teachings have been multiplied over and over in all the New Age cults (The Deceivers, p. 247).

New Age became more visible after millions of immigrants in the 1950s brought their religions and philosophies to the West.

2. Western thought also contributed to its development through:

(1) a residue of witchcraft that had been largely dormant but which revived in the 1960s. The occultism of Spiritualism, going back to the Fox sisters in the last century, also played a part. The weakening of the Christian influences in the twentieth century contributed to a growth in occultic practices.

(2) the growth of materialism and humanism led many to think that the idea of God was an irrelevance. Christianity tended to be demonized by those who found its principles or its ethics opposed to their goals, eg. many pro-abortionists and homosexuals. But there was still a yearning in human hearts for a relationship with the supernatural (with God), a relationship which

the materialism of the mid-twentieth century had denied. This left people with a void.

(3) the near despair caused byfear of a nuclear holocaust (Existentialism etc. - the only reality is the experience/existence of the moment - tomorrow may never happen, so enjoy the present) and a parallel belief that there were/ are no moral absolutes (Situation Ethics - the only right course of action is what seems to fit the situation of the moment). The result was an attitude of abandon in the 1960s - drugs, trip experiences, occultism, free love and the rest!

Together these influences created a climate congenial to the penetration of the Western world by the religions and the philosophies of the East and to the spawning of what we now call 'New Age'. Many New-Agers have no Christian basis for life, no hope of eternal life and are open to every new or revived philosophy that comes along.

2. The Development of New Age

Literature began to appear in 1971, for example, the East-West Journal supported by Timothy Leary and other academics at Harvard. Soon there was a spate of publications. Influential people, especially film stars, have given the movement status - Linda Evans (Dynasty etc), Sharon Gless (Cagney and Lacey) and Shirley MacLaine, who has written several new Age books and seems to regard herself a kind of high priestess. The book, 'The Aquarian Conspiracy' by Marilyn Ferguson articulated the movement's beliefs and aims and is regarded as a good guide to New Age thinking. She defined the aims of the movement as 'one-world religion and one-world government'.

The Findhorn Community headed by David Spangler was influential in the 1970s. Its leaders claimed to receive messages from spirit-guides and even from Greek gods. Spangler later went to the USA and set up a New Age community in Wisconsin.

While New Age is called a movement and has tremendous influence, it does not seem to have a centralised Organisation - no leader, no hierarchy, no international headquarters and, apparently, no co-ordinated strategy for

conquering the souls of men. It is rather a conglomeration of groups with a common underlying philosophy. Its ideas link up organisations which, following their own strategies, seek to change men's thinking. It influences the food we eat and the music we hear. It affects the way we treat the sick and teach our children. It changes the way we manage companies and handle the environment and it seems to be here to stay! Its literature is on sale in many of the big book shops (Waterstones etc) often in major sections placarded as displaying 'New Age literature'.

3. The Philosophy of New Age

Six distinct, but overlapping emphases, are important:

(1) Monism

This asserts that everything that exists, all reality, is one. In most cases it is argued that the material realm is an illusion and that the only reality is a spirit, a mind, a oneness that permeates the universe (cf the idealist philosophy of Hegel and of Christian Science). In that case the world is a total illusion! In other cases the material world is seen as a reality (Hindu, maya) that will pass away when everything becomes one, 'when all individuality dissolves into universal undifferentiated oneness'. (F.Capra, cit. McDowell and Stewart, The Deceivers, p 235).

As a result there is no distinction between good and evil or between humans and animals or plants. Man is essentially the same as God, as the animals and as potatoes. He, therefore, has to become attuned to the natural world around him! At an attunement centre in California he is even expected to spend time on all fours with and barking like a dog or meowing like a cat! And, believe it or not, similar things have happened at retreats in Southern Ireland.

Equally it is thought that all religions are one and that elements from them all can be accepted into the New Age hotchpotch. And, because all is one, contact with extra-terrestrial beings and departed humans is regarded as quite natural and indeed essential - advice from such beings is the way to rectify things that have gone wrong with our lives on earth.

The terms 'Holism' and 'Holistic', meaning essentially that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, are used in New Age to stress the oneness of all reality. Because everything that exists is thought to be one, New Age is something of a sponge that sucks other views, including some elements of Christianity, into itself. At the same time it increases its appeal by dressing up eastern mysticism in western clothes.

Not only so but, because all that exists is regarded as one, some New Agers (e.g. Spangler) assert that when the New Age matures (around 2060 AD) ethnic groups that wish to maintain their separate identity will have to be eliminated. To allow such groups to survive would mean that the unity of all that is would not be a reality.

(2) Pantheism

The all that exists as a unity is identified as God (or god). This is the world-view of Hinduism, Buddhism and of ancient Stoicism. It appeals to many because by including man in its concept of God it boosts his ego. Shirley MacLaine is reported to have stood on the Pacific coast calling repeatedly, 'I am God. I am God, I am God'. The trouble with this kind of pantheism (sometimes called cosmic humanism) is that it deifies the unpleasant elements of life - wickednesses and diseases of men, the cruelties of nature, red in tooth and claw and the rest.

In reality, of course, pantheism doesn't deify man or nature. It rather humanises and materialises God and imprisons him (or, as many New Agers see things, 'it') in the created world. The concept of God, if it has any place at all, is in terms of an impersonal all-pervading energy. He (or it) is the sparrow that falls and the person who thinks! 'Each soul is its own god. You must never worship anyone or anything other than self. For you are god'. (Shirley MacLaine, Dancing in the Light, p358, cit McD & S, op cit, p236).

God is thus robbed of essentials like sovereignty, personality, holiness, goodness and love. The one existence that alone has reality is God (or god). And man is part of the all that is god. As such he is essentially good and able to make all necessary decisions in relation to his own life. The individual

creates, by the exercise of his own will, the events and circumstances of his or her life. This links in with the reincarnationist idea that what we are in this life is based on decisions we make either in a previous life or in the period between incarnations.

(3) Reincarnationism

This again is an Eastern view. In Hindu and Buddhist thought it has a moral element - how one behaves in this life creates 'karma' (the overall quality of life in one incarnation), that is carried forward as the basis of justice in deciding one's station in the next. Those who are good in this life should fare better in the next incarnation!

In much New Age thought, however, individual souls, while discarnate between incarnations, consult with familiar spirits and other spirit-counsellors and make personal choices about when to be re-born and about who and what kind of person they will be. Man is thus able to work out his own future and his own salvation. On this view, the moral fibre of Hinduism is weakened or destroyed in an amalgamation with Western individualism and selfishness.

New Age, then, is a system that promises eternal existence without moral responsibility! Nonetheless each individual is responsible for the course of his life in any particular incarnation. He cannot blame others or blame circumstances or bacteria for deprivations or illnesses or injuries or nationality or anything else in his life. Everything that happens to him is fixed by choices he himself has made and conforms to the blueprint he drew up before the incarnation.

Because of this New Agers go in for what is called 'past-life therapy'. In this the therapist seeks to bring to the surface of a client's mind the processes by which he had made bad choices prior to his present incarnation and then to suggest how their 'karma' can be reversed. Salvation, if the word can be used at all, is thus release from bad 'karma' and/or release from the effects of bad decisions made during the soul's transmigration from one incarnation to another.

(4) Humanism

Since man is part of the divine it is thought very important to awaken and develop the latent potentials of each individual. Using the correct (New Age) techniques it is thought possible to move closer and closer to 'self-fulfilment' or 'self-actualisation'. The big thing, then, is a self-centred programme of 'improvement'.

(1) Improvement in health using every conceivable form of alternative medicine. They are open to the full range of occult practices, from astrology to wicca. They use treatments ranging from aromatherapy to yoga. They regard all such systems as part of the one reality that is God and, therefore, as proper to mankind.

(2) Improvement of the mind expanding its capacities for greater efficiency. This means occult divination; it means astrology, crystal gazing, ouija and and tarot cards; it means contacting spirits and extra-terrestrial beings through mediums. It means using the training courses to expand mental capacity and mental agility, which have become a major element in management training programmes (Note, Scientology, Landmark and a host of modern management training techniques).

Such thinking gives New Age an air of optimism - man is given hope because he is told that he can be 'transformed' to heights hitherto unimagined. The major weakness is that New Agers are left ignorant of and blind to the existence of sin and evil in human life. Their only interest is to bring to fruition the potential, the inherently good potential said to reside within oneself. Their systems leave man as his own saviour with some help from spirits (see Occultism, below).

(5) Mysticism

Improving one's mind to attain higher levels of consciousness means shutting down the rational mind, which New Agers say causes us to divide up reality and distinguish between good and evil, material and spiritual etc.

New Age higher consciousness belongs to those who subdue reason and programme themselves to ignore such distinctions! It is thus totally congenial to the 'trip' experience whether induced by drugs, by rhythmic music or by mystical contemplation.

Those who follow this tack become manipulable - they think they are free but in fact they submit to the experience or the suggestion of the moment and/or to occult mediums. In subduing reason the soul becomes like a fortress, with its drawbridge down and its doors open for invasion by every kind of alien influence.

Nonetheless, and perhaps rather paradoxically, the urge to improve things can and does bring out the best in some people - they want to improve the world and so develop a deep concern for the environment in which they and others have to live. They initiate and engage in crusades to reduce and eliminate pollution. The 'Green Movement' is often strongly 'New Age'.

(6) Occultism

Many New Agers claim to get guidance from spirit beings through mediums whom they call 'channellers'. Sharon Gless and Shirley MacLaine are well-known examples. MacLaine claims to receive messages from 2 spirit guides, Joshua and Ramtha, the latter a 35,000 year old master, once a warrior king, later a Hindu god and now beyond deity! A publishing industry (Ramtha Dialogues Inc of Yelm, Wa) has grown around the sayings of Ramtha and devotees meet in homes for an evening talk and in other venues for special guidance retreats with mediums who claim to relay messages from him and who charge fees for what they do!! (Areopagus, Epiphany 1989, page 48).

Astrology is also a key element. And it is not just the horoscopes in magazines and newspapers but the idea that the world is moving out of the age of Pisces (the fish), which has lasted for 2000 years and has been dominated by Christianity and rationality, and is entering the age of Aquarius (the water-carrier) in which the emphasis will be on man's full potential. The change-over to be completed by 2060 will mean one religion dedicated to preserving the planet!

As noted earlier New Age monism takes a surprising twist when it is said (eg. by David Spangler) that, in the New Age Society opponents will have to be eliminated.

4. The Tentacles of New Age

New Age permeates much of the thinking and many of the institutions of our day. For example,

(1) Much Feminism

It is argued that distinguishing between male and female destroys unity and oppresses women! Majoring on motherhood as the source of life, some of these feminists are attracted to ancient goddesses, to witchcraft dominated by women and to the idea of the earth as mother.

(2) Much Ecology

The planet is to be cared for because it, like man, is divine. In this area New Agers mount a strong two-pronged attack on the Judaeo-Christian ethic but especially on Christianity, saying,

(1) that it spawned science which separated the secular from the sacred and so, using reason, desacralised nature regarding it as a machine man could control and use. As a result man with abounding confidence in the powers of his intellect became alienated from nature and produced today's environmental crisis.

(2) that the Judaeo-Christian interpretation of Genesis 1:26 and 9:1-3 (man to rule over the rest of creation) is a charter for the exploitation of the precious resources of the earth. The idea of man ruling over the earth separates him from it and vitiates the monistic pantheism of New Age thinking. By way of contrast it is said that Eastern religions by putting man and God inside the natural realm foster a respect for nature. Similarly Animism by attributing living souls to animals, plants and even inanimate objects does the same while Christianity does the opposite.

(3) Much Holistic Health Care

What is called complementary or alternative health-care is often based on Eastern philosophies. That they include treatments that can be and often are effective is not an adequate basis for their use. Their underlying credentials need to be probed. Programmes aimed at relieving stress through meditation or crystal gazing are used as a'key in' can be highly dangerous.

(4) Some Films

Writers, producers and actors are all involved in pushing New Age. We will all be aware of the time given on children's radio and television to witchcraft in the run-up to Halloween. Star Trek, ET and other films portraying beings from outside our world having contact with people may be the products of far-fetched fantasy, but they insert such concepts into the minds of the young and the not-so-young and predispose them to accept other New Age ideas.

(5) Much Modern Music

The Beatles led the 'counter-culture' of the sixties. They consulted Hindu gurus and soon hippies and beatniks were on the trail to Kabul and Kathmandu in search of reality through drugs. Today lyrics of a more sophisticated and a more sinister and anti-Christian type are penetrating the minds of young people at discos, over radio and TV, on tapes and CDs and through computer disks.

(6) Much modern management training

New Age has to a considerable degree penetrated the business world. Some firms hope that, by providing training aimed at teaching managers to develop their full potential, they can save money and increase profits.

Hundreds of businesses in the UK offer such training and pay exorbitant prices for it (£500 per person per day in some cases). There are even more in the USA. Some courses on offer to Christian workers may include similar emphases.

Ron Hubbard's Scientology and Landmark Education International (formerly Erhart Seminar Training or EST) are aggressive in this field. Companies expect those they train in these courses to be more productive themselves and to extract greater productivity from those they manage. There is evidence that they do not retain people who fail to co-operate (or who find themselves unable to do so). Some managers have suffered breakdowns as a result of the pressures that are being put upon them. There is also evidence that marriages are suffering because managers are in effect being forced into workaholicism.

5. The Challenges of New Age

(1) To believe and present truly biblical views of God, of man and his need of redemption. Too often teaching in the churches lacks certainty and appears woolly. The truth must be presented faithfully, authoritatively and in an intelligible form - in the language and thought forms of the target audience.

(2) To foster true spirituality - New Agers are searching for reality and feel it is not found in the traditional churches. That surely means that we need recognisable reality and that we must not de-spiritualise the faith by a close attachment to the things of this world. Christians are often highly materialistic!

(3) To provide warm Christian fellowship so that people feel wanted and welcome. Too many people - especially the young - see the church as a tomb rather than a home. Every segment of society needs to be made to feel 'at home'.

(4) To face up to and tackle the great issues of our time - pollution, deforestation, ozone depletion etc. The church is not a political party but it has an obligation to teach responsible stewardship in relation to God's earth and to our own environment. Christians should be as deeply concerned about these issues as are New Agers.

(5) To maintain proper rationality. The New Age retreat from the dominance of reason is thoroughly unchristian. We are to love the Lord with the whole mind (our rational selves) as well as with our whole hearts (our

emotional selves). Suspension of reasoning functions leaves the individual without defences and open to intrusion by demons, human manipulators and temptations to act immorally. No Christian should ever let that happen.

6. Summing up from a Christian standpoint

New Age asserts that

(1) God is impersonal, one with the world and not its Creator and not distinct from it.

(2) Truth is within man and not a revelation from God through the Bible.

(3) Jesus Christ was one of many great leaders who manifest divinity but was not the Saviour, the Lord or an atoning sacrifice.

(4) Man is a spiritual being, part of the divine that is god, and not a creature made in the image of God and fallen by virtue of Adam's sin.

(5) Man's problem is that he does not realise or use his full potential, and not that he is a sinner in rebellion against God, under God's wrath and in need of a saviour.

(6) Man's need is a transformed consciousness - to know that he is god - and not biblical salvation.

(7) Man's morality is relative to his circumstances and not subject to God-given absolutes.

(8) Death is simply entrance to another realm prior to reincarnation, and not a final destiny in Heaven or Hell.

For further reading

(1) What is the New Age saying to the Church? by John Drane (Marshall Pickering)

(2) Unmasking the New Age by DR Grootius (IVP)

We give below the text of a summary of the paper read to the Members in December 1997 by Dr Maurice Dowling, who had just returned from a visit to Russia.

BAPTISTS IN THE 20TH CENTURY TSARIST EMPIRE AND THE SOVILET UNION

1. Origins

In 1944 the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (AUCECB) was formed. This paper looks at the origins of the Baptist movement in the Tsarist Empire and at its history during the twentieth century.

The dukhobors (Spirit-fighters)and particularly the molokans (milk-people) are part of the background to the Baptists' emergence. Mennonite and Stundist influences are also very important.

The "birthday" of a distinctively Russian/Ukrainian Baptist movement actually occurred in the Caucasus, in Tbilisi with the baptism of Nikita Voronin at the hands of Martin Kalweit in 1867. The young Baptist group was soon joined by Vasilii Pavlov (later commissioned by JG Oncken, the German Baptist notable).

2. Persecution under the Tsars

The repressive policies of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod (a Ministry of Religious Affairs) from 1880 to 1905, caused many problems for dissidents around the turn of the century.

Vasilii Pavlov (1854-1924) spent some years in exile in Orienburg and then abroad. At the Baptist World Congresses in 1905 [with c. 20,000 Russian Baptists] and 1911 [publication and distribution of literature permitted] he was able to report that things in Russia had improved but they were still not perfect.

Ivan Prokhanov (1865-1935) experienced harassment from both Tsarist and Soviet authorities. Prokhanov, who became a BWA Vice-President [1911 and 1923], is an example of the convergence of Evangelical Christians and Baptists. His autobiography is much valued among Baptists.

3. 1905-29

The 1905 revolution brought improvements but things began to be difficult again from around 1911. Baptists suffered from anti-German feeling during World War 1.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought about the separation of church and state, but the state remained in control of and hostile to religion. However, the 1920s were a period of growth for Evangelicals and Baptists.

4. The Stalinist purges

The example of Solzhenitsyn's "Alyoshka the Baptist". The 1929 Law on religious associations [Sunday-school and Youth work forbidden] and the "terror" of the 1930s caused much suffering. Soviet Baptists were for long unable to have contact with the BWA.

5. The October, 1944 merger

A change in official attitudes to religion during World War 2, and a Soviet preoccupation with centralisation, resulted in the emergence of the AUCECB. Earlier aspirations towards such a union (especially during the 1920s) were unfulfilled, partly because some Baptists disliked Prokhanov.

In spite of initial uncertainty international Baptist leaders accepted the new Union.

6. Post-war developments

The AUCECB managed to survive the continuation of the Stalinist purges. Things improved slightly after Stalin's death in March 1953 but during the Khrushchev era there was a period of severe harassment in 1959-64.

From 1955 AUCECB representatives were again able to attend BWA Congresses in 1955 and 1960. The statements of AUCECB leaders such as Yakov Zhidkov and Artur Mitskevich were "politically correct" and emphasised the USSR's role in the Peace Movement.

7. Divisions among the Baptists

In the early 1960s a split emerged between the AUCECB and the "Council of Churches of the ECB" (initsiativniki) over the question of compliance with the state's laws on religious association, especially the registration of buildings. This is a complex issue which has generated much bitterness.

8. Future prospects

New types of pressure; the need for leadership training; economic problems; the effects of emigration, are factors which will determine the path along which the Russian Baptist witness will develop.

How to help our fellow-believers of the former Soviet Union is a question which calls for compassion and sensitivity.

We draw attention to a recently published book by means of an excellent book review published in the Daily Telegraph.

Daily Telegraph 28 February 1998 Book Review

NEW LOOK AT SOME OLD BELIEVERS

VITALI VITALIEV applauds a sympathetic investigation into a little-known religious sect.

The Spirit Wrestlers: a Russian Journey by Philip Marsden.
Harper & Collins, £17.99

HAVING turned the last page of Philip Marsden's book, I sincerely regretted that it was my first encounter with this excellent travel writer. The Spirit-Wrestlers charmed me with its genuine spirituality and the tranquil earnestness of its author's purpose.

Marsden's interest in "Doukhobors", or spirit-wrestlers, an obscure Russian religious sect, was triggered by an accidental encounter in the exclusive Hall One of Moscow's Lenin Library. The sect's origins can be traced to the Old Believers, a large section of the Russian church which split from the mainstream Orthodoxy in 1653. The Doukhobors preached equality and opposed all authority which conflicted with their conscience. No wonder they fell victim to ruthless persecution, not just by the Soviets, but also by almost every Russian monarch, starting with Catherine the Great.

The history of the Doukhobors is replete with suffering, exile, famine, torture and labour camps. In the late 19th century, Leo Tolstoy, the sect's most influential supporter, persuaded the Tsar to let them emigrate to Canada. Only a handful stayed behind and survived - against all odds - in the south of Russia and in the Caucasus. It is these survivors whom Marsden traces in a quest "for the dissenters and misfits of the Russian fringe", which eventually

brings him to the village of Goryelovka, via the Rostov and Krasnodar regions and several small ethnic enclaves of the Caucasus.

On his way, Marsden meets dozens of fascinating characters: Old Believers and Cossacks, priests and historians, nationalists and drunks, prophets and zealots. It was from this book that I learnt about the Alans and the Yezidis - two little known, yet extremely proud, Caucasian peoples - and that it was the Russian sect of the Molokans (Milk-Drinkers) who first coined the term "Communists" in the 1820s.

Marsden's descriptions of people and places are juicy, terse and to the point. A street in the dilapidated and nearly deserted Doukhobor village of Tambovka, in which two houses out of three were ruined, "had about it the look of a sparsely-toothed grin". And here is his portrait of a typical Old Believer: "... he sat somehow twisted on a stool and stared at me from a face of vivid contrasts - the white of his skin, the black of his beard, the milky blue of his deep-set eyes".

Unfortunately, the book has its weaker points, which often grow from its numerous merits. By the end of Part One, Marsden's portrayals of the blue-eyed, long-bearded and long-suffering sectarians become somewhat repetitive. As if getting slightly bored with them himself, Marsden occasionally loses his track and dissolves the narrative with lengthy digressions on Kuban Cossacks, Solzhenitsyn's grandfather, Stalin's nephew and even the history of Russian vodka. These passages, although informative and well written, have little to do with the main, purpose of his search.

At times, Marsden flaunts his knowledge of Russian culture -and language. In the scene on a bus in the "Kolkhoz Lenina" chapter, he tries to impress an unsuspecting Russian woman, whom he has just met, by bombarding her with names of his favourite Russian writers. Yet his proficiency in the language leaves much to be desired. He has multiple problems with correct spelling of Russian (and other) place names. He quotes (thrice!) a popular saying which, in his interpretation, goes: "Rostov is the mother of crime and Odessa is the father", whereas in reality it is the other way round: Odessa (a noun of the feminine gender) is the mother; Rostov (of the masculine gender) - naturally and unequivocally - the father.

We'll survive. We always have", says Luda, a Doukhobor woman, at the end of the book. Marsden has reached his goal: the surviving Doukhobor village in Georgia. But this is not the end of his pursuit of the roots and the true meaning of Russian dissent - a poorly studied and often mis-understood phenomenon that played such a crucial role in bringing down an evil empire.

Like all good travel books, this one leaves the reader with many more questions than answers. In a way, Marsden himself deserves to be called a spirit-wrestler. Or, if not exactly that, then definitely a spiritual traveller.

THE ORIGIN OF CULTS

by Norman Shields

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, a cult is a system of religious worship, especially as expressed in ceremonies, devotion or homage to person or thing. The Collins Concise Dictionary gives several definitions, each of which seems far too general and would include every conceivable religion or denomination thereof that ever did or could exist.

(1) 'a specific system of religious worship'
(2) 'a sect devoted to the beliefs of a cult'
(3) 'intense interest in and devotion to a person, idea or activity'

For us as evangelical Christians the definition has to be much narrower. While we acknowledge that there are multitudes of groups, Christian and non-Christian, that qualify for the designation 'cult' we usually confine our thought to groups which claim to be Christian but which deviate in some vital point or points from the essentials of biblical faith. In most cases they separate themselves from main-stream Christian churches and so can also be thought of as schismatics or sectarians. In some cases these groups have, over time, settled down and have become part of mainstream Christianity, (see references to follow on Waldensians and Anabaptists). In other cases they have turned away from and have abandoned the essentials of Biblical Christianity

We are all familiar, I am sure, with a number of cults. The Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses are frequent callers at our doors. The Christadelphians and the Christian Scientists advertise in our local papers. Some openly identify themselves while others, like the Cooneyites, operate secretly and are loath to disclose their identity.

Our concern today is to examine, as best we can, the way in which cults originate.

1. Seeds in New Testament life

On the pages of the New Testament we find several indications that what we now call cultism began to raise its head before the end of the apostolic age. These were.

(1) Devotion to human leaders

In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians we learn that there were divisions and/or quarrels in their church. Some were saying, 'I follow Paul'; others were claiming to follow Apollos or Cephas (Peter) and still others with an apparent air of superiority were saying, 'I follow Christ'. (1 Cor 1:12). Paul repudiated the whole business - it was evidence of worldliness and a lack of spirituality. For him Christ was not divided - he and Apollos and Peter were merely servants through whom the Corinthians had believed. They were not to be accorded any real importance on their own account - 'neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow' (1 Cor 3:1ff).

In this case the issue seems to have been that people were attracted either by the personality or by the emphasis of an individual apostle - his charm, his powers of oratory, his teaching, his ability to give leadership or whatever. As a result they had become followers of a man!

(2) Acceptance of erroneous teachings

Writing to the Colossians Paul warned against being taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ (Col 2:8). What is known as the Colossian heresy seems to have been a early form of Gnosticism, which linked Jewish wisdom concepts with pagan mystery religious ideas and which regarded everything material as evil. It regarded perfection (and therefore, full salvation) as dependent on transcending one's material existence by advancing to higher knowledge involving secret mysteries. Special ceremonies and strict ascetic observance of feast-days were required (Col 2:16-19).

In this case the issue seems to have been that the truth of the gospel was compromised by the supposed higher knowledge offered by Gnosticism, which was, incidentally, a precursor of Freemasonry and of similar philosophies in which initiation into secrets is regarded as essential to ultimate absorption in Supreme Wisdom.

(3) Deceptive and arrogant leadership

In the first and second Epistles of John we learn of false prophets, deceivers (Gnostics again with their denial of the reality of our Lord's incarnation - if he was divine he could not have come into contact with a material human body which was regarded as inherently evil).

Again the issue was the truth of the Gospel. Those to whom John referred were clearly a danger to his readers and he therefore gave them a way of distinguishing the truth from the errors of the Gnostic sects (1 John 4:1-6, 2 John 7-11).

In Third John a different type of sectarianism appears. Diotrephes, who loved to be first, was setting up his own empire, refusing to have fellowship with John and with other brothers, even putting those who wanted such fellowship out of the church (vv. 9-10). In this case the issue centered in a dominant and a dominating personality who insisted in having his own way. The issue was a matter of power in the church.

Thus far three issues have emerged and, as we shall see, they are pointers to the issues that are often involved in the origin of more modern cults - pursuit of personalities, departure from the truth and a personal lust for power.

2. Sects and cults throughout Church History

The history of the Christian Church has been marked by a constant tendency to cultic sectarianism. Students of the early period will be familiar with Basilidians, Marcionites, Montanists, Millenarians, Docetists, Donatists and the rest.

The Middle Ages saw the process continue and, as the Enlightenment developed, sectarian views proliferated. One group, known as the Cathari or 'the Pure', were highly successful in Spain, France and Northern Italy. They were dualistic believing that the Good God had two sons, Satan and Christ, the former an evil rebel and the later essentially good. They held on to the old Greek idea that all matter is evil and so advocated extremes of asceticism as the only way to salvation. They used the New Testament, but because matter was regarded as evil they did not believe that Christ had a real body or that he died on the cross. Yet they seem to have earnestly espoused righteousness and to have gained the allegiance of thousands of people most of whom seem to have been drawn from the humbler walks of life (Walker, History of the Christian Church, pp 249-251).

The Middle Ages also produced the Waldensians whose leader (Valdez or Waldo of Lyons) tried to live by the precept of Matthew 19:21: 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor ...' Waldo took this and the instructions of Matthew 10 literally and began preaching on those principles. Others joined him and they called themselves 'the Poor in Spirit'. In 1184 the Pope excommunicated them and another group, the 'Humiliati', whose centre was in the Milan area. The two groups united as the Waldensians. They asserted that the Bible and especially the New Testament was the sole rule of belief and life. It was a book of laws, each of which had to be followed precisely - preaching two by two and clad in rough attire with no public prayers other than the Lord's prayer. At the Reformation they became fully Protestant and still operate in Northern Italy.

Luther's dispute with the Catholic Church seems to have stimulated what Roland Bainton calls 'a multitude of sects' (Early and Medieval Christianity, p. 165). In many of these the motivating factor seems to have been similar to that of Waldo, namely, the restoration of an original or primitive Christianity. From our point of view one of the most important was the Anabaptist movement, which introduced congregational autonomy and an insistence on personal faith and on baptism as a profession of that faith.

Thus there emerged a fourth factor which was and is involved in the creation of sects or cults, namely, a professed desire to return to and to conform solely to the patterns set out in the New Testament.

3. The cults of more recent times

When we examine the cults of our own day we find the three principles mentioned above still in operation. To these we are able to add several others.

(1) Following a personality

In most of today's cults the initial impetus usually came from one person who was joined by followers like those who said, I am of Paul or I am of Apollos. They became - or are - devotees of that person - they follow him or her, even though they profess devotion to the Lord. However as time passes and numbers grow, allegiance often shifts from the founder to the movement itself and/or to its current leaders. Nonetheless the founder's teachings and systems are still in the background and members of the movement are essentially his or her followers. Thus,

- Seventh-day Adventists are followers of Ellen White.
- Jehovah's Witnesses are followers of Charles Russell.
- Mormons follow Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.
- Christian Scientists follow Mary Baker Eddy.
- Worldwide Church of God is made up of people who follow Herbert W. Armstrong. [Recent doctrinal changes seem, however, to mark a departure from some Armstrong teachings]
- Exclusive Brethren follow JN Darby and his associates.
- Cooneyites follow William Weir Irvine and Edward Cooney.
- The Children of God (alias, the Family) follow David Berg (aka Moses David).
- Moonies follow Sung Myung Moon and his wife whom they call 'Father' and 'Mother'.

(2) Acceptance of doctrinal error

In many cases at the heart of a cult is a serious deviation from some cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. Often the triune nature of God is compromised or denied. Thus Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians and others are Unitarians. God is one person and Christ is one of his creatures. Mormons are polytheistic, believing in a multitude of gods, while New Age

is pantheistic believing that every one and everything is part of one great whole which is God, or more accurately 'god'.

In some cases cults begin by emphasising one doctrine or a group of doctrines to the neglect of other balancing elements in the biblical revelation.

Thus JN Darby began with the unity of all believers and then, in order to preserve that unity, made the definition of a believer so narrow that he cut out the vast majority of the family of God - destroying unity in the name of unity!

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, founders of the Churches of Christ and of the related Disciples of Christ (now the Christian Church), picked up the truth of believers' baptism and pushed it to the point where it became an essential of salvation and the means of regeneration.

Edward Cooney, like Waldo in the 1100s, concentrated on Matthew 10 and made our Lord's instructions for a short-term mission the be-all and end-all of the Christian life. Thus beliefs, biblical in essence and sincerely held by the individuals concerned, were in effect turned into heresies and became the central teachings of a cult.

(3) A desire for power

Several founders of cults spin a tale of disagreement in some church to which they had previously belonged. They often present this as a difference over doctrine, but underneath lies a personality clash - the person himself or herself felt that their views were not being heard, their gifts not recognised and their capacity to give leadership was being ignored. In short, he or she was not accepted as pope, didn't like the situation and moved out to set up some show with himself or herself as its head.

Mary Baker Eddy says that in 1878 she moved to a Baptist Church as its pastor and then adds, 'We parted in Christian fellowship if not in full unity of doctrine' (MB Eddy, Retrospection and Introspection, p 15). This is clearly coded language for a personality clash and for the fact that she was not getting her own way - her power was being restricted.

Sun Myung Moon claims that his authority is Jesus Christ, who appeared to him in 1936 to show him he had to complete a work which Jesus had left unfinished. Moon taught that a new or second messiah was to be born in Korea in 1920, the year of his own birth, and his followers believe him to be that messiah even though he himself does not specifically claim that he is. Moon maintains that the Bible needs interpretation and claims that God called him to be its authoritative interpreter. He even insists that without him the Bible is an inadequate guide. He is the ultimate authority in his Unification Church. Power rests with him. At the same time Moonies, like Scientologists, subject their contacts to non-stop verbal assaults in order to wear down their resistance and secure a commitment to the movement. Half-hypnotised contacts submit and hand over their lives to the organisation - they belong to Moon and he has secured power over them!

The Church of Scientology (so-called even though it is essentially non-Christian) was set up as a vehicle to preserve its founder's power in his own empire. Ron Hubbard's Scientology began as a non-religious outfit but when he was running foul of American law, he established it as a church in order to gain protection and tax-exempt status under the US constitution. It became an agency marked out by financial malpractice and taking in some $500,000 per week in so-called donations. It is an instrument exercising virtually total power over those who are foolish enough to become enmeshed in it. The same pattern applies in the case of the Children of God and of a number of extreme way-out cults in the US. Similar charges can be laid at the feet of some Charismatic leaders who have indulged in forms of shepherding which have given them virtually absolute power over their followers.

(4) Professed return to New Testament Christianity

Such a return was at the heart of the rise of Waldensian movement in the twelfth century and, in Reformation times, of Anabaptism. People were tired of the soulless religion and the unceasing demands of the Catholic Church. The new Protestant or Reformed churches which often identified with existing national boundaries and political systems seemed little better. The Reformation had stopped half-way and the Anabaptists wanted to go all the way.

The same motivation arose, of course, among early Baptists and it is still widely espoused in our own circles. We often claim that our churches are New Testament churches and say it in a way that implies that the churches of other denominations are not such.

In the early 1800s Thomas and Alexander Campbell, father and son respectively, having begun as County Antrim Presbyterians became Baptists in Pennsylvania. Later they moved on to form their own groups in what was known as a Restoration Movement.

Today, there is a somewhat similar emphasis known as Reconstructionism in both Charismatic and Reformed circles. The focus seems, however, to be more along the lines of restoring Old Testament regulations which the New Testament shows to have been fulfilled and therefore to be no longer applicable. [See Peter Masters, World Dominion, pubd. Wakeman Trust 1994].

Dr John Thomas, the founder of the Christadelphian movement, blamed the traditional churches for being apostate and claimed that Christadelphians alone were the body of Christ and were a return to primitive Christianity.

Jehovah's Witnesses, who are in some ways dependent on Christadelphian thought, make a similar claim to have returned to Biblical Christianity - they say that they have swept away the traditions and errors that have encrusted Christendom for centuries. Christian leaders and Bible interpreters are accused of placing their own or other men's traditions above the Bible.

In adopting what was called 'the Jesus Way', Weir Irvine and Edward Cooney were claiming to return to New Testament Christianity.

Anthony Norris Groves believed that he was expressing New Testament Christianity when he planted what is called 'the seed of Brethrenism' in the suggestion that ministry at the Lord's Table would arise spontaneously from within the assembled group - 'the Lord will edify us together by ministering to us as he sees good from ourselves'.

Explaining the communes of the Children of God, John Ho, son of Moses David Berg, said, 'We want to do what the Bible said in Acts - that all those who believed were together' (Areopagus, Fall, 1987, p.50).

Paul Wierwille, founder of 'The Way International' claimed that in 1958 he had an encounter with God in which he was told that he would be taught the Word of God as it had not been known since the first century.

It will hardly have passed unnoticed that the heading to this section is 'Professed return to New Testament Christianity'. In some cases the claim was or is undoubtedly genuine - such indeed was the aim of the Anabaptists. But one will be forgiven, I trust, for suggesting that there is, in other cases, a link between this point and the previous one and that the supposed return to New Testament Christianity was or is a way of conning people into accepting the control of a movement that maintains itself by exercising power over its members.

(5) A claim to have prophetic revelation

Again and again we find the founders and the leaders of nineteenth and twentieth century cults claiming that they have the gift of prophecy and that they are therefore the recipients of new revelation from God. That their followers still claim to possess the gift means that they are able to amend the teachings of the cult at any time and in so doing to claim that they have direct and definite instructions from heaven.

Sung Myung Moon claimed to have several direct revelations from God. In 1936 it was an alleged appearance of Jesus Christ. In 1945 it was a vision in which he learned that he was the 'absolute victor of heaven and earth'. Thereafter he took the name Sun Myung Moon meaning 'shining sun and moon'.

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, claimed to be the recipient of a number of revelatory visitations. The earlier ones were of unnamed heavenly messengers, but then in 1829 he claimed visitations by John the Baptist and by the Apostles Peter, James and John. In 1830 he learned that he was 'a seer, a prophet and an apostle of Jesus Christ'. Thus he was invested

with the role of a prophet and as such he and his successors could justify the bizarre system they developed as Mormonism. Subsequently Lorenzo Snow, the leader in 1898, received new revelation and as a result the movement ceased encouraging converts to settle in Utah and began the intensive missionary campaign we see everywhere today. For the first 145 years of its history Mormonism did not admit black people to its priesthood and was not interested in missioning among them, but in 1978 Spencer Kimball, president at the time, received a new revelation to the effect that black men could be admitted to the priesthood - the gift of prophecy was still operating!

(6) Genuine spiritual dissatisfaction

Throughout history there have often been genuine seekers after a living relationship with God. Such have found the established or institutional church more of a tomb than a home. They feel imprisoned in a straightjacket of rules and rituals that lack real spiritual life. The Waldensians and the Reformers had such experiences and developed more biblical forms of the Christian religion. Others, who have withdrawn from the security of an established institution, have tended to combine a real desire for fellowship with God with a package of unbiblical ideas. In this category one might include the Campbellite restoration movement, the Cooneyites and the Children of God. In the latter case David Berg was seeking to evangelise Hippies in California in the 1960s. The young people he targeted were drop-outs from society, who had abandoned family and education and the materialistic rat-race of a free-for-all economy. They sought spiritual reality through trip experiences induced by pop/rock music and drugs. They felt they could not find what they wanted in any church and so they formed their own groups and lived in communes where they found what they thought was spiritual reality in a mixture of Bible teaching, evangelism and free sex.

In a very real sense the cultic group, whatever its hue, becomes the crucial social unit for the devotees. They substitute it for the natural family - it becomes a substitute family - and for other spheres of social intercourse - a substitute club or church. Thus those who are committed to a cult become very defensive of their new family circle and regard anyone who questions its beliefs and practices as attacking what is in fact most precious to them.

(7) Negative responses to questioning or to proposals for change

It would be remiss of me not to refer to the fact that an obstinate resistance to change among established Christians in positions of leadership can stimulate secession and the formation of a cult. Older Baptists will remember how the ministers of the so-called main churches used to oppose any of their members who felt it was right to be baptised as a believer. Their reaction drove people out of their churches and into those which baptised only on profession of faith.

Sometimes thoughtful Christians, who come up with ideas that are new to church leaders - different understandings of passages of Scripture, proposals for new forms of worship or whatever - find themselves 'shot down in flames'. They then feel unwanted and sooner or later vote with their feet and move out of that church. Some may go to different churches, but others feel hurt and brood over the way their ideas have been dismissed and, as they brood, their thoughts are no longer subject to the correcting influences of stable church life. In that situation they can easily deviate from the truth, perhaps slightly at first but as they develop their ideas they move away at a tangent and become heretical. And as soon as others associate with them and become followers holding the same ideas a cult is formed.

Mishandling of such folk at an early stage must, surely, be a factor in the origin of at least some cults. Older and more traditional church members and church leaders need to exercise great care to avoid alienating those who produce new and creative ideas.

LOWER GARDINER STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, DUBLIN

by Florence M Ruddock

'The Irish Baptist Magazine in its long-running feature - "News of the Churches"- frequently gave information about the work carried on by the Harcourt Street Church, Dublin, in the attractive building located in Lower Gardiner Street in that City. This work ceased a good many years ago. Soon after my conversion, I had the privilege of being called to share in the work, and was able to continue in it until the work was finally closed down.

'Gardiner Street is in that part of the City of Dublin which lies between the Great Northern Railway terminus and O'Connel Street. Its fine old houses were once the dwellings of the wealthier and more prominent people of the City. At the time I am thinking about these buildings had mostly fallen from their high estate to the level of tenements and slums, and had become the dwellings of a great population of very needy folk indeed.

'The Baptist work carried on in this region for many years was two-fold. There was the Baptist Old Ladies' Home situated in Gardiner Street itself where lady members of Baptist churches, who had reached advanced years, were provided with a comfortable home in which to spend the latter days of their lives. Then, at the back of this Home and attached to it, was a very attractive little church building (capable of holding perhaps a hundred and fifty people) where evangelical work was regularly carried on. It was in this part of the work that I found my little share.

'Morning worship and evening gospel meetings were held on Sundays also a Sunday School with about seventy to one hundred scholars. On other days of the week a prayer meeting, a gospel meeting, a men's meeting and a Dorcas meeting for women were held. In addition to these was a young

women's Bible class carried on by Mrs CE Kinch (sometime matron at the Irish Baptist College then located in Dublin). A regular open-air meeting was held in the district. The public services were listed with those of other Protestant Churches and displayed in hotels so that many visitors to the City from Britain and more distant places found a place of worship in the little Bethel.

'Visitation of the people in the district was regularly carried on. It was often a wee bit nerve-testing climbing up long flights of stairs in total darkness in winter evenings to the rooms where the people lived. But there was joy in the effort, and there still remains the joy of the knowledge that the Lord blessed what was done. He used it as the means by which He led some to salvation, and to service for Him, both at home and abroad. There is joy also in the memory of the goodly company of the saints who shared the fellowship of the work, some of whom are still with us, and some of whom have been called to the presence of the Lord.

'The needs of the people called for a good deal of material aid. There was unusual difficulty in this matter during the time of the Easter Rebellion of 1916. Gardner street was within the City, which was completely shut in by a cordon of British troops, whilst almost all the [church]workers lived outside the City boundary. Under the [gun]fire from both sides, movement out of the houses was exceedingly dangerous, so that the people scarcely dared to venture out of doors. Even if they did go out there was little chance of their getting even the very necessaries of life, and were in great need when freer movement was again possible. Provisions in the suburbs also were not very plentiful; but still, as soon as permission to enter the City was given, it was our privilege to bring help to many who were almost at starvation point. It is not to be forgotten easily with what gratitude this help was received.

'Known results of the witness in Gardner Street give yet one more proof that "our labour is not in vain in the Lord", and one feels a real regret that it had to be discontinued.

BOOK REVIEW

Impelled by Faith: A short history of Baptists in Scotland, (Stirling, 1996), 44 pages. John S Fisher.

A good introduction to the beginnings of the Baptist witness in Scotland, and of its development down to the present day. Available from the Baptist Union of Scotland. No cover price.

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY REPORT TO ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 1998

The programme of meetings for the past year was interesting for its inclusion of two papers on "The Origin of Cults" and "The New Age Movement" by Norman Shields and one by Maurice Dowling on "Baptists in the Twentieth-Century Tsarist Empire and The Soviet Union". The programme concluded with a paper on "The Minnis Mills Diaries" by Claude. These papers and other articles of interest are published in the Society's Journal.

The re-location of the meetings in Windsor Church, Belfast, has proved popular with the members. We are truly grateful to "Windsor" for granting freely the use of the church hall and facilities. The March and December meetings will be held there in 1998. In September we will meet in the Lisburn Church to hear a paper by JT Murray on the history of this church formed in 1926.

The cataloguing of archival material in the Society's care continued through the year. In this area of activity a start has been made on the creation of a database of Irish material from the holding in the famous Angus Library at Oxford. We are indebted to the Librarian and Archivist for their co-operation, and to Principal Paul Fiddes (Regent's Park College) for his gracious interest.

Andrew Reid is well-advanced with his research towards a definitive history of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission for publication. His work is being supervised by Dr. Maurice Dowling as the topic has been approved by Queen's University, Belfast, leading to the award of an M Th. degree.

The Members of the Society wholeheartedly supported a proposal to raise the annual Membership subscription from £5 (fixed and unchanged from 1968!) to £10. The subscription entitles the Member to a copy of the Society's Journal.

The preservation of the history of our churches in Ireland, and the stimulation of interest in contemporary issues affecting them is a continuous task. We look ahead with confidence in the Lord as the year 2000 draws near.